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Stirring the Melting Pot:

Jewish Food and Regionalism in the Twentieth Century United States of America

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Abstract

This paper examines Jewish food through the lens of Jewish communal cookbooks, particularly sisterhood cookbooks from Reform and Conservative synagogues throughout the twentieth century in America. In discussing Jewish food culture and regionalism, the focus will be on the Jewish communal cookbooks from four cities: Atlanta, Georgia; Boston, Massachusetts; Los Angeles, California; and Cincinnati, Ohio. U.S. regions speak to cultural, agricultural, immigration, and economic differences; therefore, Jewish food through a regional lens should reveal the impact of these differences through the foodways of each place.

Jewish food symbolizes Jewish holidays, immigration, and communal gatherings. It can also represent Jewish identity. This paper attempts to show the value behind these topics by analyzing a few key elements in each of these four cities. First, each city's history and regional cultural norms are described, and an analysis of the cookbooks is provided. Using the cookbooks as the source material, the ingredients, dishes, and level of Jewish observance found within each are analyzed. This examination of Jewish food and regionalism in the twentieth century provides another dimension through which the Jewish American experience can be understood.

Acknowledgements

Jewish food is much more than an academic research topic to me. Food is what has brought my family together, and I still cherish memories of setting the Rosh Hashanah table with my mother, helping my father slice brisket on Shabbat, and gathering with family around a platter of chopped liver and continuing into blessings over challah and sweet-and-sour meatballs. I therefore must begin by acknowledging the immense role my parents, Sharon and Jack; grandparents, Edward and Elaine Benoff and Edward and Elaine Shapiro; and brothers, Jared and Gregory, have had in shaping what it means to have a Jewish home and one where food is a focal point. What I have come to know as family traditions have guided my research to understanding the way Jewish people eat and cook across the United States. I am grateful to you all for continuing to inspire this research every time I step into a kitchen or open a cookbook.

Second, I must acknowledge Rabbi Gary Zola, PhD, and Dr. Dana Herman for guiding me through this research. From the beginning, when I came to them with hefty ideas for a thesis, they were able to channel my passion and direct me to the resources and through the research and writing process. For their patience, critiques, and being incredible sources of support and knowledge, I am deeply appreciative.

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Introduction

Food is necessary to survive, but culture and community allow people to thrive and grow. "Jewish food" is not merely nourishment that Jews consume. As one scholar has noted, food is the materialization of culture. Food became an expression of culture because it is prepared by human beings for their own consumption and, also, because human beings are free to choose what they will and will not eat.[1] Food and human identity are interwoven because food is inextricably bound to history and memory. In the context of the Jewish community, it follows, then, that food in the United States tells the story of American Jewish culture and, concomitantly, Jewish life in America. Yet, it is important to bear in mind that the story of Jewish foods in American life is not just one singular story.

In 2011, historian Colin Woodard boldly argued that "the United States is a federation comprised of the whole or part of eleven regional nations, some of which truly do not see eye to eye with one another."[2] Although demographers and geographers often disagree over the nature and influence of regionalism over the course of U.S. history, there is general agreement that the United States is composed of numerous regions and even subregions.[3] According to Woodard, "regionalism explains much about who we North Americans are."[4] Regionalism is not merely about geography; it is also about a sense of identity.

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[1] Massimo Montanari, *Food Is Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), Introduction. See also, Jean Louis Flandrin, Massimo Montanari, and Albert Sonnenfeld, *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
[2] Colin Woodard, *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America* (New York: Viking, 2011), 3.
[3] Mark Abadi, "Even the US Government Cannot Agree on How to Divide up the States into Regions," *Business Insider* (May 10, 2018), accessed at https://www.businessinsider.com/regions-of-united-states-2018-5.
[4] Woodard, 4.

The U.S. Census Bureau divides the United States into four regions: the Northeast, the Midwest, the South, and the West Coast. The American Jewish community has a long and historic presence in each of these four regions. Even though a great deal has been written about American Jewish history and why Jews have ended up in specific regions of this country, only a handful of scholars have examined the role that regionalism has played in shaping Jewish food culture in the United States. One of the main scholars who has done this is Marcie Cohen Ferris in her book *Matzoh Ball Gumbo,* wherein she shares Jewish stories, recipes, and histories of different cities in the American South.[5] Her focus on the Southern Jewish foodways aids in deepening an understanding of the experience of Jews throughout the region. Joan Nathan's cookbook, *Jewish Cooking in America,* adds to this scholarship by focusing not on a region, but on specific cities and the foods, restaurants, Jewish food industries, and individual stories in them. She covers a great number of American cities and small snapshots into their foodways through stories and recipes.[6] There are also a few scholars who have focused not particularly on regionalism, but simply on Jewish American food. Some of this scholarship touches on regional impacts, such as Saks and Deutsch's *Jewish American Food Culture,* which explains that "Americans on the East Coast do not necessarily have the same diets as those in the Midwest, the South, the Southwest, the West Coast or the Pacific Northwest. While some foods are available nationally, others are regional or local in origin and availability."[7] Other authors, such as Hasia Diner and Simone Cinotto in *Global Jewish Foodways*[8] and Leah Hochman in her edited volume

[5] Marcie Cohen Ferris, *Matzoh Ball Gumbo* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
[6] Joan Nathan, *Jewish Cooking in America,* 1st ed. (New York: A. Knopf, 1994).
[7] Jonathan Deutsch and Rachel D. Saks, *Jewish American Food Culture* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 17.
[8] Hasia R. Diner and Simone Cinotto, *Global Jewish Foodways: A History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

Tastes of Faith: Jewish Eating in the United States,[9] focus primarily on waves of Jewish immigration in the country and the way the population has spread throughout the country. Judith Friedlander, author of *Jewish Cooking in the American Melting-Pot*, explains the development of specific food items that are eaten by Jews. She also helps ground the value of Jewish American cuisine in the publication of cookbooks: "Since the 1960's, general cookbooks for American kitchens have included sizable samples of dishes from every major ethnic group living in this country. It is not surprising, therefore, that Craig Claiborne's popular *The New York Times Cook Book,* first published in 1961, has a fair number of Jewish recipes, which of course means Central and Eastern European Jewish."[10] Friedlander discusses here the way that Jewish foods have spread beyond the Jewish people and the way in which cookbooks can reveal much about the foodways of the United States.

Each of these authors focus on American Jewish cooking primarily through the scope of history and/or stories. Those scholars who have studied regionalism discuss its impact on social, cultural, political, and economic ways of life. Throughout major points of American history, divides can be drawn not simply by ideas, but by where people are located. Regionalism is a way to understand how and where these boundaries lie.

When it comes to the foodways within a region, these can similarly be tied to the cultural norms, economic state, or even history of the region, as well as its agriculture and natural climate. Further, food is connected to identity and it "tells us not only how people live, but also how they think of themselves in relation to others by asserting diversity, hierarchy, and organization. A people's cuisine—a particular food or the way it is being prepared and eaten—

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[9] Leah Hochman, ed., *Tastes of Faith: Jewish Eating in the United States* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2018).
[10] Judith Friedlander, *Jewish Cooking in the American Melting-Pot* (Paris: Association française d'études américaines, 1986), 27.

often marks the boundary between the collective self and the other."[11] Studying regional foodways, then, is a way to understand how Jews in the United States have drawn a boundary around themselves and with other cultures. It is also one way to define what it means to practice Judaism, particularly at home, over holidays, daily meals, and weekly Shabbat observances. Food is a key part of Jewish festivals and practices, and understanding how living in different parts of America have shaped it will reveal more about Jewish American peoplehood and culture. This research attempts to contribute to the fledgling field of Jewish food culture in America by conducting original research in the ways that regionalism in the United States influenced American Jewish food culture throughout the twentieth century.

This thesis examines Jewish food traditions from four regions designated by the U.S. Census Bureau. Although other scholars map the regions differently, to cover nine or eleven regions would simply be too much of an undertaking for a thesis. Rather, this paper has identified four major cities within the four regions where Jewish life has had historically deep roots. These cities have been identified as major centers based on research on regionalism and Jewish American history. They have also been identified due to the access to information and primary source documents (i.e., local cookbooks) from each of them. Within each chapter, published cookbooks from sisterhoods and local Jewish organizations have been analyzed. There are hundreds of these documents preserved in the Klau Library and the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. Most sisterhood cookbooks are inherently local documents; therefore, they were created to serve the needs and interests of their home community as opposed to a national audience. The contents of these collections frequently

[11] Diner and Cinotto, *Global Jewish Foodways: A History*, 161.

bespeak local food traditions that reflect food ways of the region as well as an array of recipes that derive from an admixture of Jewish and regional culinary traditions.

The four urban centers are Atlanta, Georgia, reflecting the American South; Boston, Massachusetts, in the Northeast/New England; Los Angeles, California, to represent the West Coast; and Cincinnati, Ohio, a Midwestern city. In Atlanta, an important cultural impact is the relationship of Jews to the racial divides of the South. The founding of this whole region was deeply rooted in agriculture, but tied into this work is a long history of slavery and racial inequality. This put Jewish people in the South in a difficult position, questioning whether they were a minority or could assimilate into white Southern life and culture. This identity crisis comes through the history of Jews in Atlanta as well as the foodways that develop among the Jewish community. Either way, the deep connection to the fertile land also plays a major role in this metropolitan area.

The rich colonial history of Boston and its beginning as part of early America will be discussed. Its location along the coast where fishing has been a main industry will play into the foodways of the city. Further, the cultural norms of the city, which became known as the "Athens of America,"[12] impact the foodways of this region. The other key aspect of Jewish life in Boston will be the relationship (or lack thereof) to other peoples, which in this case are primarily the Irish.

In Los Angeles, the Jewish community interacted with various other immigrant groups, whose foodways heavily influenced Jewish cuisine. Los Angeles brings a unique history to the discussion of regionalism, as it was primarily seen as the new frontier in American history and is

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[12] Jonathan D. Sarna, Ellen Smith, eds., *The Jews of Boston: Essays on the Occasion of the Centenary (1895–1995) of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston* (Boston: Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, 1995), 3.

also a newer major metropolitan area. It grew rapidly primarily in the twentieth century and developed its own culture and unique cuisine shaped less by a regional history and more by recent developments. The city's Jewish history is also quite relevant and will be discussed in framing the Jewish food and culture of the area.

Finally, Cincinnati is a pioneering city, where its early history is centered on a search for economic opportunity. Its position along the Ohio River and bordering Kentucky makes it not only a center of early trade but also a place that has been affected by many of the neighboring states. The other core part of Cincinnati Jewish culture is its place in Reform Jewish history. As a central location for the beginning of the movement, Jewish identity may be expressed differently here through the foodways than in other regions.

Comparing an array of sisterhood cookbooks in these four regional city centers as well as the city's food culture will demonstrate how these local recipe books reflect culinary trends that align with regional and demographic differences. Each chapter will cover a regional framing and specific history of the city. There will also be a focus on the distinct dishes and ingredients of the cities and how they appear in the Jewish communal cookbooks. This analysis will reveal the impact of assimilation and, simultaneously, attempts to maintain a unique Jewish identity.

Chapter 1: Atlanta

The South as a Region and Jewish Life Within It

To understand the South as a region of the United States is to understand its culture. A marker of the deep South has always been the "leisurely pace of life," which is seen as virtuous.[1] Much of this region began with Anglo-Saxon settlers: "The United States, throughout the colonial and national period, was heavily formed by the power and the predominance of Anglo-Saxon values, and it was in this atmosphere that the south developed."[2] This founding created societal norms and a strong culture and value system. Some of these norms and values were centered around a "lack of pretention, honesty in relations with others, loyalty to one's family and friends and self-confidence in one's worth and values" but also led to some negative aspects, such as "provincialism and intolerance."[3] Being part of the South meant being part of the Anglo-Saxon majority population and norms. Yet it also meant being part of "a region identified with stagnation—backward, rural, poor, and racist, a colony of the industrialized North."[4] It has long been associated with anti-intellectualism, opting instead to idealize its own memory of the past.[5]

Part of this past is a long period of slavery, which is tied to agriculture. Since the beginning of the United States, the Deep South has been a place "based on large-scale agriculture."[6] While the economy became rooted in the land, there has also been a "romantic

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[1] Woodard, *American Nations*, 260.
[2] Abraham Lavender, "Jewish Values in the Southern Milieu" in *"Turn to the South": Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Nathan Kaganoff and Melvin Urofsky (Charlottsville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 125.
[3] Ibid., 126.
[4] Joel Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981), 130.
[5] Stephen J. Whitfield, "Jews and Other Southerners: Counterpoint and Paradox" in *"Turn to the South": Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Nathan Kaganoff and Melvin Urofsky (Charlottsville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 76.
[6] Woodard, *American Nations*, 302.

attachment of southerners to the land [that] must bewilder the rest of the United States."[7] The deep connection to the land is not just economic; it also appears as a core part of the food culture of the South. Food was grown locally and eaten in season. Fresh produce became key to Southern identity through meals, restaurants, and markets. Food was also a way in for those who were not directly part of the Anglo-Saxon culture in all ways, such as the Jewish population.

The South, unlike any other region, is a place that offers "this sense of knowing where you are and who you are—in the best, nonracist sense of the phrase, quite literally knowing your place, both geographic and your position in it—might be the elusive factor that is southern and good and possibly capable of surviving."[8] While each city or rural town may have its differences, a person knows where they stand in the socioeconomic and cultural realm of Southern life. One scholar describes this notion, explaining that "the sense of place, which in Southern writers is as keen as an animal's, is organically entwined with filiopietism. Apart from race, the distinguishing mark of the Southern mind is embodied in the slogan of the French right-wing propagandist Maurice Barre: la terre et les morts."[9] This literally translates to the land and the dead, emphasizing the cultural connection of the South to its physical land and the memory of the past in the form of the dead.

The awareness of where a person fits into this culture is core to this reality. Within it, though, is the fact that people or families who have been in the South for a long time strive to be as "Southern" as possible. Some even argue that "being a 'Southerner' is the most fervent and time-honored regional distinction in North America, it almost makes you wonder if ordinary

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America*, 140.
[9] Nathan Kaganoff and Melvin Urofsky, eds., *"Turn to the South": Essays on Southern Jewry* (Charlottsville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 76.

people know something that the academicians do not."[10] While the economy of the South is rooted in the land, the way of life is still a leisurely one. As discussed, an essential part of defining culture is what and how people eat. The food of the South and the way people gather around it is rooted in these same two concepts. The main thought process is the idea and the attempt at being a "Southerner." What does this mean for Jews, then? How have Jewish people, through various waves of immigration, fit into this culture?

Knowing one's place in the South was complicated for Jews. Early Jewish families found themselves more often aligned with minority groups, living in similar neighborhoods and shopping at the same stores. Into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jews worked to associate themselves with their non-Jewish neighbors: "These Jews attended social events, ran for political office, and assumed positions of leadership in local organizations. In the process they became deeply involved in civic affairs, acquired respectability in business, played the role of pocket banker, and helped launch new enterprises."[11] Jews became immersed in Southern life in all possible ways. Knowing one's place in society is part of being Southern, but Jews strived to be both Jewish and Southern: "Just as the southern Jew does not necessarily view himself as any less southern because he has some Jewish values, so he does not necessarily view himself as any less Jewish because he has been influenced by and has reacted to some southern values."[12]

The cultural norm of this region is to be a "Southerner," which is about how one holds oneself publicly. Thus, many "Jews adapted their culinary traditions in the predominantly Christian southern worlds where they were deeply shaped by the region's rules of race, class, and

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[10] Garreau, *The Nine Nations*, 131.
[11] Louis Schmier, "Jews and Gentiles in a South Georgia Town" in *Jews of the South: Selected Essays from the Southern Jewish Historical Society*, ed. Samuel Proctor, Louis Schmier, and Malcoln H. Stern (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 6.
[12] Lavender, "Jewish Values in the Southern Milieu," 133.

gender."[13] Spending time in gentile realms and through the food practices of the Jewish community are both ways of becoming part of the culture and beginning to assimilate. The South reflects syncretism in its foodways, an "amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought."[14] With culinary traditions come the weight of the entirety of the culture. In the South, a key part of the culture is racial tensions. Just as Jews had to find their place in Southern society, they had to figure out their relationship with African Americans.

Race Relations and the Place of Jews

In the colonial period of the United States, Jews were seen as minorities and often aligned, in many ways, with the African American community. Part of this alignment was geographical, and part was economic, as "commerce provided additional intergroup contacts."[15] While many Jews throughout the South felt comfortable trading or living near African Americans, in the mid-1800s, Jews who had the desire and means to purchase Negro servants generally did so [...] and local Jews participated in the slave trade."[16] While Jews achieved higher social status in the South, African Americans, unfortunately, did not. In this socioeconomic shift, Black community members became the caterers, cooks, and workers in the Jewish community. However, when Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe soared around the turn of the century, the poorer Jews were not aware of such racial dynamics and were happy to do business with African Americans: "Long accustomed to providing goods and services for a brutalized peasantry, the Russians had

[13] Garreau, *The Nine Nations*, 131.
[14] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), s.v. "Syncretism."
[15] Steven Hertzberg, "Southern Jews and Their Encounter with Blacks: Atlanta, 1850–1915," *Atlanta Historical Journal* 23 (Fall 1979): 9.
[16] Ibid., 8.

few if any temperamental objections to dealing with blacks and, unlike their white gentile counterparts, no deep-seated compulsion to manifest anti-Negro prejudice. Indeed, they aggressively sought the blacks trade and treated their customers with unaccustomed courtesy."[17] Even the Jews who did achieve higher social status and wealth and were already in the United States for a number of generations felt "sympathetic toward the black struggle for racial equality, [but] political circumstances constrained their actions."[18] In many ways, the Jewish community of the South, primarily in the urban hubs, needed African Americans to maintain their own social status. As much as Jews desired to be seen as Southerners, they still "occupied a marginal status within southern white society, their acceptance as whites was entirely conditional on their continued compliance with the prevailing social order.[19] Southern culture was white, Anglo-Saxon culture, and staying within these boundaries defined being part of the South. Some of this was unspoken, but at many times in Southern history, antisemitism was on the rise and the presence of African Americans provided a sort of buffer and sense of security to know that they were not the only marginal people and that they were not the bottom of the caste system.[20] This was the price of acceptance into Southern and gentile life; "nonconformity on the vital issue of race relations would not be permitted."[21] While there was a great racial divide between whites and Blacks as well as Jews and Blacks, food often served as a means of cross-cultural interaction. "Food passed back and forth between Jewish and African American families as black cooks and caterers baked sweet potato pies and cornbread dressing for Jewish employers and

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[17] Ibid., 11.
[18] Clive Webb, "A Tangled Web: Black-Jewish Relations in the 20th Century South" in *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil: A New History*, ed. Marcie Cohen Ferris and Mark Greenberg (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2006), 195.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Samuel Proctor, Louis Schmier, Malcolm H Stern, *Jews of the South: Selected Essays from the Southern Jewish Historical Society* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 4.
[21] Hertzberg, "Southern Jews and Their Encounter with Blacks," 19.

went home after holiday meals and bar mitzvahs with leftover chopped liver and kugel."[22] These food items are part of the Southern culture, which many white Christians brought into their homes, as well, through a period of slavery into a period of paid domestic help. The Jews became part of this same racial and food culture, as part of their Southernness. Blacks and Jews may not have been equals in the class system ingrained in this region, but food brought the communities together: "Relationships were embedded in shared recipes and food traveled between Jewish and African American homes."[23]

This relationship grew deeper around the early 1900s, when women began joining the workforce and the public world. This included Jewish women throughout the South, who began spending time either in paid positions or doing volunteer work for their communities, leaving the work of the home for others: "While black women managed Jewish households, Jewish women raised funds for their synagogues through benefit meals, temple bazaars, and the sale of community cookbooks."[24] This dynamic led to the kitchens of Southern homes, Jewish and gentile alike, to be run mainly by black women. The food of the South is deeply rooted in this structure and dynamic, so, in this way, the Jewish community became more Southern by being part of this racially divided culture. In fact, many non-Black people throughout the South have claimed and continue to claim these foods and recipes as their own: "Ironically, although African American women were central figures in synagogue and home kitchens throughout the Jewish South, they did not appear in synagogue and community cookbooks from the early twentieth century to the present."[25]

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[22] Cohen Ferris, *Matzoh Ball Gumbo*, 8.
[23] Ibid., 8.
[24] Ibid., 9.
[25] Ibid.

The food and culture of this region is completely intertwined and wrought with racial conflict and status. In some ways, the Jewish community fit in nicely with the white, Christian population of the South by adapting, appropriating, and enjoying the food and labor of the African American community. This, for many throughout the region, was evidence of being a Southerner and an American. In other ways, though, Jews were still outsiders, and could not always fool the people around them otherwise.

Zooming In: Jewish Life and History in Atlanta

Historians view Atlanta as core to the South, especially in terms of regionalism. One scholar explains that "Atlanta, undeniably, is the capital of the Dixie" because of its geographical location, history, and how it has developed with the times.[26] Atlanta represents both the richness of a Southern past and the development of a large city, with major universities such as Emory, Morehouse, and Georgia Tech, and major companies such as Coca-Cola.[27]

Jews have called the State of Georgia home since the mid-1800s and have been central to life in Atlanta. The community became rooted here with the establishment of a synagogue in 1860, the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, later simply known as "The Temple."[28] As Jews established their community and places of worship, food was always central—even for "the first Jew who lived in Atlanta, Jacob Haas," who "opened a dry goods business with Henry Levi in 1846."[29] And as more Jews came to the area, most worked as merchants but many "were [also] active in such fields as banking, brokerage, insurance, and real estate and pioneered in the

[26] Garreau, 131.
[27] Cohen Ferris, 9.
[28] "Atlanta, Georgia," Jewish Virtual Library, 2008, online at https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/atlanta
[29] Ibid.

manufacture of paper products and cotton bagging."[30] Jews and immigrants throughout Atlanta were in a wide range of industries, which also led to their desire to assimilate, and which would allow them to blend in with others in the business world of the South. Jews could not always fully blend in, though.

This is most evident in a few key moments of antisemitism and hate that struck the Atlanta Jewish community. The first of these was the case of Leo Frank. In 1913, Frank, a Jewish factory superintendent, was unjustly accused of murdering one of his employees, a young girl. While the case gathered great publicity, Frank's fate rested not in the justice system, but in the mob who, in 1915 in Marietta, Georgia, broke him out of prison and lynched him.[31] This case struck many Southern Jews, reminding them that as American and Southern as they felt, they were still subject to false accusation and antisemitism. This paired with a later occurrence in Atlanta, on October 12, 1958, when the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation was bombed by white supremacists during the civil rights era. While no one was harmed in the attack, it was assumed that the Reform temple was struck for two reasons: one, an act of hate against the Jewish community itself, and two, because the rabbi, Jacob Rothchild, outwardly supported the civil rights movement and the African American community.[32] In some ways, this bombing reminded Jews that they were separate and different from their white Christian neighbors, and that those Jews who advocated racial integration had clearly taken a dangerous stance. These two events "were defining moments in the history of Jewish Atlanta"[33] and the Jewish South. The aftermath of both led many Jews to consider their place in Southern American society, but after the synagogue bombing, the "outpouring of sympathy and support from both black and white

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).
[32] Cohen Ferris, *Matzoh Ball Gumbo*, 141.
[33] Ibid.

Gentile communities … helped to end the era of Jewish fear that began with the Frank trial in 1913, but the unease surrounding the Frank case never disappeared."[34]

Still, Jews in Atlanta continued their efforts to blend into the norms of the South, and one important way they did so was through foodways and food culture: "Atlanta Jews embraced New South boosterism and its symbols from Mammy-endorsed flour to the South's national anthem, 'Dixie.'"[35] Early on, Jewish merchants opened stores in Black neighborhoods, where they were then influenced by the products and foods that sold well to those in those areas. Just as race was an indicator of culture and place in society throughout the South, so too was it in Atlanta. Atlanta followed the same pattern as other places in the region: Jews began in Black neighborhoods and then, with assimilation, shifted to the white and gentile parts of the community. For Atlanta Jews, assimilation came with a very specific relationship to food and race.

From the early 1900s through the 1950s, Jews in Atlanta romanticized the Old South along with their gentile neighbors, even though most of their families had immigrated to the city after the Civil War. Their kitchens were filled items such as "mammy" cookie jars and salt-and-pepper shakers; they readily purchased Aunt Jemima pancake mix, Uncle Ben's Rice, Gold Dust Twins cleaning powder, and White Swan shortening, with a label that featured an African American kerchief-clad "mammy" with a pie in her hand that assured customers—including kashrut-observant Jews—"Ain't no Hog Fat In dis Pie."[36]

The more these sorts of products became the norm in Jewish households and kitchens, the more Jews felt they belonged and the more they were accepted by the non-Jews around them. Most Reform Jews adapted and made many personal decisions regarding food, mostly choosing

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 6.
[36] Ibid., 144.

not to observe the laws of kashrut, at least not fully. For others in Atlanta, keeping kosher was evidently still important, so far as an Orthodox rabbi in the area granted a "hekhsher to Coca-Cola, an Atlanta company, … in 1934."[37] While this marked an adherence to Jewish traditions and laws, it also showed how even Orthodox Jews desired to share in the local delicacies, as Coca-Cola was headquartered in Atlanta. Now even Jews who observed dietary laws could feel more Southern by enjoying the drink that was in every restaurant and in the hands of all people throughout Greater Atlanta.

In the same way a cold Coca-Cola product could now be served at Shabbat dinner, many Jews brought in Southern foods and dishes in their own way. Households began blending the lines between Jewish and Southern food: "As Southern Jewish identity evolved from the eighteenth century through the twentieth century, some women kept southern and Jewish dishes separate, while others mixed the cuisines by adding pecans, fresh tomatoes, okra, butter beans, and sweet potatoes to holiday menus and substituted regional specialties such as fried chicken, gumbo, and beef ribs for the traditional roasted chicken at Friday evening Sabbath supper."[38] Even this short list of food options over the traditional chicken dinner is evident of the Southern Jewish experience. Food became representative of a home that was attempting to assimilate to the culture around it. Southern cooking included many of the crops that were grown locally, particularly a surplus of local fruits and vegetables. Along with food and recipes that were heavily adapted from surrounding communities, "the region's moderate climate provided a long growing season and bountiful crops of fresh vegetables and fruits that southern women preserved and pickled to eat through the winter and late spring."[39]

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[37] "Atlanta, Georgia," Jewish Virtual Library, 2008. https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/atlanta
[38] Cohen Ferris, *Matzoh Ball Gumbo*, 18.
[39] Ibid.

Similar items and additions appear in the cookbooks of local synagogues. One of the earlier Atlanta sisterhood cookbooks, produced in 1933 from Ahavath Achim, includes a forward that opens with this line: "The modern Jewish cook is a product of her inherited past as well as her present environment."[40] This shows a clear sense of self-awareness of the cultural importance of food in Jewish life and history, but also in the new world of the American South. Another sisterhood cookbook from 1975 introduces itself in a similar manner: Just as Temple Sinai has a most diverse congregation, so *The Happy Cooker* is unique in that it is made of many different kinds of recipes: "Our recipes reflect our relaxed, casual lifestyle, our gourmet tastes, our Jewish heritage and traditions."[41] This introduction goes directly back to the cultural norms of the South, which include the affectation of a laidback and leisurely life. Without directly saying it, these cookbooks in the first few pages identify with the Southern culture. Additionally, most of the cookbooks that came from sisterhoods (mainly from Reform synagogues) were not kosher or did not mention anything about kashrut. While this may simply indicate that kashrut was irrelevant and not even worth mentioning, it may also reflect a personal internal struggle that many Jewish homes and cooks had to face.

Jewish Food of Atlanta: Sisterhood Cookbook Analysis

The details beyond the recipes in these cookbooks can depict a great deal about the culture of the Jewish community. This chapter will analyze five cookbooks, published by five different Atlanta-area synagogues, both Reform and Conservative. They span from 1933 to 1996. All of them are affiliated with sisterhoods, and thus the authors and most people who utilized

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[40] *Ahavath Achim Sisterhood Cookbook* (Atlanta, GA: Ahavath Achim Congregation, 1933), Forward.
[41] *The Happy Cooker* (Atlanta: GA: Women's Committee of Temple Sinai, 1975), foreword.

them were the women of each specific congregation. This range shows the variation of these cookbooks throughout Greater Atlanta and the twentieth century.

In a 1933 Atlanta sisterhood cookbook, the recipes are presented with no background and in general sections, but, interestingly, there is a chapter dedicated to the foods of Passover. This section shows the great significance of Passover in food traditions.[42] In the *Daughters of Israel* cookbook, produced by the Conservative Adas Yeshurun Synagogue in 1960, the editors present recipes in general categories and then break them down by Jewish holidays. There are no explanations or introductions, so the readers are assumed to already known about the holidays, and the cookbook serves simply to share and connect the members of sisterhood through food. This cookbook contains advertisements for local businesses, such as insurance companies and dry goods and hardware stores. Most of the cookbooks were used as a source for fundraising for the sisterhood or the synagogue, and the ads show the way that local businesses and industries worked with and most likely bought ads in the cookbooks. These ads show the communal partnerships, particularly since it is indistinguishable which businesses are Jewish owned or not.[43]

In a 1975 cookbook from a Reform synagogue, Temple Sinai, it is clear that there is not a strong focus on religious expression. There are separate chapters for eggs, cheese, and noodles, and then another one for meat, fish, and poultry, which could indicate either some level of adherence to kashrut, or simply a carry-over of a tradition of kashrut—i.e, the separation of foods into distinctive chapters may well mean nothing more than that this was how their parents and grandparents did it. There is no outright discussion or note in the book of Jewish traditions or customs. Even at the beginning, in place of an introduction, there is simply an "Our

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[42] *Ahavath Achim Sisterhood Cookbook*, 116–127.
[43] *Daughters of Israel Cookbook* (Augusta, GA: Adas Yeshurun Synagogue, 1960).

Appreciation" title page with the names of those who contributed recipes to the cookbook. These were printed in three columns, front and back. There is one small mention of Judaism tucked into the final chapter of the book, which is presented under a separate header labeled "Holiday Desserts." This chapter contains only eleven recipes, eight of which have the word "Passover" or "matzah" in the title. A slim number of common Ashkenazi recipes appear in this book, but they are scattered throughout—for example, kugel appears in the "Dairy, Eggs, Cheese, and Noodles" chapter, and chopped herring is in the "Fish" chapter. In this cookbook, the value is placed upon people and community; traditions are either assumed to be known, or irrelevant. The fact that most of the traditional foods are tied to Passover testifies to the important role that holiday played even in highly assimilated homes.[44]

Other sisterhood cookbooks include noteworthy mentions of Judaism. For example, in a cookbook produced by a Reform congregation in 1983, the first page includes a picture of the synagogue in Atlanta. While the table of contents in many ways looks like the other cookbooks, this cookbook contains a chapter titled "Traditional." The first few pages of recipes are almost exclusively Passover recipes, emphasizing, again, how key the holiday is to the Jewish cook and palette. The chapter also begins with a few brief sentences explaining each of the Jewish holidays as well as a list of all the traditional foods that were displayed on the seder plate and their symbolism. There is a blessings section here, which includes the prayers that are to be recited over bread, wine, and candles (for Shabbat and Yom Tov), presented in both Hebrew and as transliteration. One cannot help but wonder why there is no English translation of these prayers. Perhaps the omission was accidental, or there was no need because the meaning was

[44] *The Happy Cooker*, 207–217.

either not important or already known, even at the Reform synagogue from which this cookbook comes from.[45]

This cookbook has a few additional distinctive features, one of which is a chapter titled "Garden Scene." It is only about five pages long but includes subheadings about, for example, how to plant a vegetable garden, what to plant, how to tend it, hints and things to keep in mind, and harvesting. This could be rooted in the importance of the land, and local ingredients, and agriculture to Southern life. It also could simply represent a trend in the United States, as gardening as a hobby has ebbed and flowed throughout the country's history. The other unique part of this cookbook is the "Traditional" chapter. A number of pages at the beginning of the book and at the start of each chapter give helpful hints, substitution options, and measurement conversions. This raises the question: Who was this cookbook meant for? This chapter suggests that the cookbook's editors were mindful that many of those who would be using the cookbook had not been raised and/or taught these tips and tricks, as had earlier generations that were raised in the kitchen.[46]

The question of who the audience was continues to be relevant, as the final cookbook analyzed here comes much later—1996. The Jewish content is increased here compared to the other Atlanta cookbooks. First, it opens with a series of introductions, the first being an "Only at Temple Emanu-El" short section that reads like an ode to the women who uphold Jewish life through food and feeding those in her life. It concludes with the words: "And now we say to y'all "ess Gezunterhait!!"[47] This one sentence sums up, in many ways, what it is to be Southern and

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[45] *The Temple Sisterhood Cookbook* (Atlanta: GA: Temple Sisterhood, 1983).
[46] Ibid., 206.
[47] *Knaidles, Knishes and Then Some* (Atlanta: GA: Temple Emanu-El Sisterhood, 1996), cite quote.

Jewish, balancing the language and tongue of both identities—"y'all" for the Southern identity, and "ess gezunterhait" for the Yiddish and Eastern European one.

The opening pages continue with an explanation of the sisterhood itself, the work it does, and its connection to the umbrella organization of Reform Jewish sisterhoods, the Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ). The introductory material also contains some brief words of appreciation from the rabbi and cantor, followed by a list of "Holidays We Celebrate," which includes an explanation of each holiday and blessings that are traditionally recited in Hebrew and English (no transliteration except for *hamotzi*, the blessing over the bread). This chapter is most striking because it includes menus for each of the holidays, and in these menus one can easily discern the impact of Southern cuisine. For example, the Shabbat menu has chicken soup, knaidles (matzoh balls), chicken, potatoes, and a side of baked squash and corn pudding. The Chanukah menu includes potato, zucchini, and carrot latkes. The Purim menu includes a variety of hamantaschen options, kreplach (triangular noodles filled with chopped meat or cheese and served with soup), and a mishmash of green beans and pecans. An Erev Yom Kippur menu includes stuffed cabbage, round challah with raisins, and special peas and stuffed tomatoes. In addition, this cookbook contains menus for Thanksgiving and for a picnic. The list of menus as well as the items on them all show the careful balance between Jewish life and American Southern life through the lens of food. While most items on each holiday menu could be found in other regions, the small additions to the menus are the Southern culture manifesting itself in the form of food at sacred moments in the Jewish calendar and home. This cookbook contains similar chapters to the others described above—with chapters including, for example, dairy; fish, meat and poultry; baked goods and desserts; and fruits and vegetables. There is also a Passover chapter in the back of the book that includes blintzes, cakes, appetizers, desserts, meat, and

poultry. Many of these recipes are decidedly *not* kosher for Passover, indicating that, for the editors of this cookbook, Passover serves as the umbrella terms for particularly Jewish foods.

Jewish Food of Atlanta: Ingredients

A key component in the Southernness of these five cookbooks is the use of particular food items that were not nearly as common in other regions of the country. Crops in this part of the country have always been identified with Southern food, especially fruits. While many different fruits are enjoyed throughout the United States, they become a component to every part of the meal in the South due to the longer growing season. One cookbook lists copious salads and vegetables served with fruits.[48] And in another, the main courses include regular items such as chicken and steak, but there are twists, such as papaya sauce, cherry chicken, banana beef, and orange honey chicken.[49] The most distinctive of fruits, though, are peaches. Georgia peaches "have long been savored, even though the fruit originated in Persia and was brought to the New World by the Spaniards, [...] the first settlers in the Carolinas and Georgia found peaches under cultivation by the Indians."[50] Peaches really became a staple in Georgia in the mid-1800s, as agriculture grew and the region was on the brink of industrialization, which led to refrigerated railroad cars that allowed Georgia peaches to be sold throughout the United States.[51] This core fruit became associated with the state and today is a familiar food item. In the sisterhood cookbooks, peaches appear in every chapter on dessert, but they often specify "*fresh* peach pie" (emphasis added), showing how significant peaches are and that fresh ones were readily available and preferred.[52]

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., 43, 153.
[50] John Edge, "Foodways - New Georgia Encyclopedia," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, online at https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/foodways-overview/.
[51] Hilde Gabriel Lee, *Taste of the States: A Food History of America* (Charlottesville, VA: Howell Press, 1992), 117.
[52] *The Happy Cooker*, 169.

The cookbook from 1983 not only includes a recipe for fresh peach pie, but offers peach custard and two variations of a peach Jell-O mold.[53] The use of peaches in the gelatin molds, especially, shows the cultural foods of the era reflecting the regional diversity. Gelatin molds were a key part of culinary history in the United States dating back to the turn of the century, with lard-based molds, then spanning the twentieth century as the branded Jell-O packages, recipe booklets, and unique molds became commonplace.[54] The trend of gelatin-based molds spans the entirety of American culinary traditions, but each region has added its own, personal variations.

Beyond peach Jell-O and the sheer amount of fruit intermeshed with all courses, there were several other items that make the Atlanta sisterhood cookbooks distinctive. The prevalence of various nuts in these cookbooks seems to reflect yet another regional influence. Just like fruit, nuts seem to make it into every part of the meal: in salads, roasted vegetables, and pecan-crusted chicken. One cookbook includes recipes for praline squash, spinach pecan bake, and pistachio cheese balls.[55] The frequent use of the nuts in Atlanta cooking is thanks to "the loamy soil of south Georgia, [where] peanuts and pecans thrived; since the 1950s Georgia has led the nation in pecan production."[56] Nuts appear in classic Southern pies, with each Atlanta cookbook having a number of options of pecan pies. One sisterhood even goes as far as to title two of the desserts "Georgia Pecan Pie" and "Georgia Peanut Butter Ice Cream Pie," emphasizing the location and food culture that has grown around these dishes.[57] Nuts, particularly pecans and peanuts that were grown in Georgia, do not simply appear in generic desserts and Southern specialties, but

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[53] *The Temple Sisterhood Cookbook.*
[54] Judith Weinraub, "The Molding of America," *The Washington Post* (July 30, 1997), online at https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/food/1997/07/30/the-molding-of-america/c1952974-24e4-4c16-aa45-e5ad26e3b3a0/.
[55] *The Temple Sisterhood Cookbook*, 14, 62, 65.
[56] Edge, "Foodways."
[57] *The Temple Sisterhood Cookbook*, 14, 62, 65.

also in Jewish traditional foods. While prune hamantaschen can be found in nearly all Jewish cookbooks, the Atlanta sisterhood added pecans to the prune filling recipe.[58]

In addition to the ubiquitous fruits and nuts, the sheer number of vegetables and vegetable variations in these sisterhood cookbooks is astounding—again, due to the agricultural customs of the South. All the cookbooks contain many recipes incorporating vegetables, including butter beans, broccoli, green beans, artichokes, and different types of squashes—but the most prevalent is the sweet potato. One sisterhood cookbook includes, in the vegetables chapter, eight variations of sweet potatoes, including candied, brandied, souffles, and pies. This is significant not just to show the use of vegetables, but also because sweet potatoes were grown throughout the South, meeting the high demand for them in both the Southern and the Northern region. Sweet potatoes were also integrated into Southern cooking partially because they were popular in the Black community, whose traditions came from their enslaved forebears, many of whom came from countries where yams were grown.[59] In this way, the flavors and style of cooking of sweet potatoes in the South were greatly influenced by the cooking traditions of slaves and Black domestic workers, who passed along recipes that were extra sweet, such as candied or twice baked.[60] By contrast, sweet potatoes eaten in the North would often be boiled or baked.

Other vegetables appear in the Atlanta cookbooks in great detail. In one cookbook there are seven ways to cook spinach, four for cauliflower and broccoli, and a small handful of green tomato recipes.[61] In another, the salads chapter includes four bean salads, and the chapter

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[58] Ibid., 162.
[59] "Sweet Potatoes," American Cookery & A History of Its Ingredients, online at http://www.digitalussouth.org/vegetable/vegetable.php?vegName=Sweet+Potatoes
[60] Ibid.
[61] *The Temple Sisterhood Cookbook*, 51–64.

devoted to vegetables contains many recipes for casseroles, spanning from a broccoli-bean, rice and spinach, and squash casserole all the way to a zucchini pie.[62] An even earlier collection of recipes from the 1930s includes lima bean cholent, stuffed tomatoes, and corn chowder.[63] This reflects not only the influence of Southern food culture, but the adherence to the agriculture of the region, which depended on "the availability of vegetables [which] followed the dictates of the season: beans in the summer, green corn in the fall."[64] The emphatic and specific emphasis on beans and corn are shown not only by how many recipes, Jewish and general, call for beans, but also by the large range of corn recipes—corn chowder, corn muffins, corn bread, and corn fritters.[65] Corn in agriculture and cooking in the Atlanta area dates to "before the arrival of white settlers, [as] Creeks and Cherokees living in present-day Georgia had long cultivated corn, pounding and soaking kernels for use in porridgelike dishes and breads."[66]

Another vegetable particular to this region are Vidalia onions, a species of sweet onion that originated and is grown in Vidalia, Georgia. Vidalia onions are "low in sulfur and high in water content, . . . [and] prized for their sweetness."[67] These onions were first cultivated in the twentieth century and did not become commonplace in Georgia until a bit later, so it took a while for them to appear in Jewish cookbooks. The 1996 cookbook includes recipes for Vidalia onion soup and Vidalia onion pie, showing the impact of this Georgia specialty.[68]

Jewish Food of Atlanta: Dishes

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[62] *The Happy Cooker*, 118–141.
[63] *Ahavath Achim Sisterhood Cookbook*, 23, 47, 167.
[64] Edge, "Foodways."
[65] *Knaidles, Knishes and Then Some.*
[66] Edge, "Foodways."
[67] Ibid.
[68] *Knaidles, Knishes and Then Some*, 37 and 119.

Beyond the many local ingredients in the Atlanta sisterhood cookbooks, certain dishes are key to the impact of Southern food culture on the Jewish community. For example, pies in all forms have deep roots in American culture. They began in Europe and were brought to America by the British, who often enjoyed meat-based pies.[69] Each area of the United States adapted this dish to fit their own tastes and availability of ingredients. So throughout the South, pie became a reflection of the foods that were grown and eaten in each place.[70] In the Atlanta area, the two types of pies that are included in nearly every cookbook are pecan pie and peach pie. The importance of these two ingredients has already been discussed above, but the number of recipes and variations of these two pies in the sisterhood cookbooks show that a wide range of Southerners, regardless of ethnic or religious background, enjoyed them. Likewise, while sweet potatoes are a core part of Southern cuisine, the dish that spans these cookbooks and culinary traditions of Atlanta homes is the sweet potato souffle—each one containing butter, sugar, and cinnamon, with nuts being optional; and one adds sherry[71] while another adds marshmallows and raisins,[72] among other variations. These recipes emphasize that sweet potatoes were cooked to be as sweet as possible, with many additions—dried fruit, sugars, and spices used frequently in Southern cooking.

A dish that has less to do with ingredients and more to do with history is Brunswick Stew. This originally began as "Georgia squirrel stew" but later transitioned to a hearty, mostly pork-based soup known as "Brunswick Stew [which became] popular in other parts of the South [as it was] plain but plentiful."[73] Many who were raised in Georgia or traveled through the area

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[69] Laura Mayer, "A Brief History of PIE," *Time* (November 26, 2008), online at https://time.com/3958057/history-of-pie/.
[70] Elisabeth Sherman, "All the Best Pies in the US Come from the South. Here's Why.," (August 16, 2022), https://matadornetwork.com/read/classic-southern-pies/.
[71] *The Happy Cooker*, 132.
[72] *The Temple Sisterhood Cookbook*, 66.
[73] Gabriel Lee, *Taste of the States*, 115.

reflect on enjoying this dish: "Just as in the lowlands, ham and chicken were the main meats, but venison and small game were also common, especially in the local version of Brunswick Stew."[74] This dish was most often made with nonkosher meat. One may surmise that many Jews living in Atlanta may have known about Brunswick stew but avoided indulging because it was blatantly nonkosher. Yet the draw of assimilation was strong, and it is clear that some found ways to adjust to these nonkosher delicacies. One individual who grew up in Albany, Georgia, reflected: "Many of the usual Jewish traditions were mixed with southern ones with a black influence. We had, for example, good southern pit barbecue and Brunswick stew with Kreplach in it."[75] This combination shows the way that Jews combined and acculturated Southern and Jewish foods together. Others wanted the Southernness of the stew, but rather than adding kreplach, they simply adjusted the choice of meat; for example, one sisterhood cookbook includes a recipe for "Chicken Brunswick Stew"[76]

Throughout the South, fried chicken became a staple, and, in addition to pork, chicken was one of the most common meats in Georgia.[77] Fried chicken spans the regions of the United States, but the "standard Southern US version is either coated in flour or batter and then fried to a crisp in oil."[78] Many scholars suggest that fried chicken came from West Africa and that the Africans who were brought to this continent as slaves introduced the recipe to the New World. Other experts, however, insist that the style of cooking and flavors of Southern fried chicken may be too different to make this case. Many food scholars are unsure exactly how far back this dish dates and the exact path of how it became part of American cuisine.[79] What is clear is that

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[74] *The Temple Sisterhood Cookbook.*
[75] Joan Nathan, *Jewish Cooking in America,* 1st ed. (New York: A. Knopf, 1994), 226.
[76] *The Happy Cooker*, 96.
[77] Gabriel Lee, *Taste of the States*, 115.
[78] Adrian Miller, "The Surprising Origin of Fried Chicken," accessed November 24, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20201012-the-surprising-origin-of-fried-chicken.
[79] Ibid.

"from the 17th to 19th Centuries, conventional wisdom designated the American South as fried chicken's native habitat," and further, "Southerners made it a centerpiece of their regional cuisine and boasted that only African Americans, mostly enslaved, could make 'authentic' fried chicken."[80] This draws an uncomfortable boundary to say that enslaved people were the only ones who could properly make it, especially as fried chicken became core to Southern cuisine and homes, without giving many of the generations of people forced into labor any credit for their work in defining Southern cooking. The dish is then taken on by all Southerners, including Jews, who enjoyed traditional styles of Southern fried chicken, covered with flour, fried, and topped with lemon.[81] One of the Jewish cookbooks gets creative with this classic dish by having "crusty chip fried chicken," which has a similar process, but the chicken is coated with crushed potato chips rather than flour and spices.[82] Each of these recipes shows how the Jewish table looked like non-Jewish tables throughout Atlanta.

Jewish Food of Atlanta: Putting the "Jewish" in Jewish Cookbooks

The Jewish population in Atlanta mirrors most of the United States when it comes to migration—the early years were mostly German Jews, with a small number of Sephardic Jews.[83] The majority of the Jewish population in Atlanta and other Jewish hubs grew immensely with waves of Eastern European immigration spanning the late 1800s to the early 1900s.[84] This population quickly outnumbered the early minority of Sephardic and Central European Jews, and the food reflects this new majority: "The food of this time was extremely similar to the food that

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[80] Ibid.
[81] *The Happy Cooker*, 103.
[82] *The Temple Sisterhood Cookbook*, 97.
[83] No cookbooks or recipes from these communities were available for research purposes, although Atlanta does have a Sephardi synagogue, Congregation Or Veshalom, which was established in the early 20th century.
[84] Jonathan Deutsch and Rachel D. Saks, *Jewish American Food Culture* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 115.

the Jews ate in Eastern Europe. One could walk in a Jewish immigrant neighborhood and find herrings, pickles, smoked and spiced meats, produce, and bread and bagels sold from pushcarts or trays on the street."[85]

Several consistencies exist, regardless of region. Almost all of these Atlanta sisterhood cookbooks contain a Passover chapter or, in one of them, a "Traditional Jewish Foods"[86] chapter. Most of the recipes in these sections are Ashkenazi. For example, each of these books has varieties of blintzes, kugels (a baked casserole, frequently made from egg noodles or potatoes), and a wide range of cabbage-based recipes. Most also include Jewish Eastern European items such as tzimmes (a Jewish stew of sweetened vegetables or vegetables and fruit, sometimes with meat), borscht, herring, and liver. These foods come from various parts of Eastern Europe—for example, borscht and cabbage-based recipes, which find their roots in Ukraine and Poland.[87] Other recipes show the range of Jewish migration, such as kugel and spaetzle, which find their origins in Germany. One cookbook contains Middle Eastern recipes, such as grape leaves (dolmas), couscous, tabouleh, and orzo,[88] while another has a Jerusalem chicken recipe: chicken cooked in butter with artichokes, parsley, and sherry.[89] While each of these cookbooks have some examples of Jewish dishes from other regions, most of the recipes in Passover, traditional, and holiday chapters are Eastern European by nature.

Although some of these recipes may look identical to those in other regions, there are a few Southern twists: "The foods and ingredients that Jewish Americans consume depend heavily on the region of descent of the individual and the current region in America in which one

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[85] Ibid., 16.
[86] *The Temple Sisterhood Cookbook,* 160ff.
[87] Gil Marks, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Food* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010), 64, 84–85.
[88] *Knaidles, Knishes and Then Some.*
[89] The Temple Sisterhood Cookbook, 99.

lives."[90] For example, among the chopped liver offerings, one cookbook also contains a recipe for mock chopped liver, a vegetarian alternative made from string beans and walnuts.[91] These substitutions reiterate the significance of vegetables and nuts as staples throughout Georgia and the rest of the South, as discussed previously.

In the South, where the leisurely lifestyle meets food, the result is often barbecue—or some variation thereof, as the sisterhood cookbooks list many ways to cook meat. The iconic Jewish meat-based recipes for corned beef and brisket show dozens if not hundreds of ways to cook these two dishes. The 1983 cookbook, for example, offers four recipes for brisket: one with sherry and catsup, one that is barbecued, one cooked in beer, and one with sauerkraut, which can only be assumed to be a nod to the German beginnings of Jewish life in the region.[92] The cookbook from 1996 also includes four options: two that seem standard to recipes found throughout the United States and two more particular to Atlanta: a barbecued beef brisket that calls for a bottle of liquid smoke and a stuffed brisket with broccoli farfel stuffing.[93] The barbecue versions in both the 1983 and 1996 books show the impact of Southern life and Southern cooking on the Jewish taste buds. The last option, a brisket with a broccoli farfel stuffing, appears to be a perfect combination of Jewish and Southern food—farfel and brisket being traditional Jewish items and then the molding of this into a stuffed dish with a Southern-based vegetable. Similarly, the 1933 cookbook includes a brisket and beans recipe,[94] and the 1960 one includes a recipe for brisket with lima beans.[95] In a personal reflection on growing up in the South, one author discusses moving out of state and needing to explain to all those in New

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[90] *Knaidles, Knishes and Then Some*, 17.
[91] *The Temple Sisterhood Cookbook*, 14.
[92] Ibid, 82–83.
[93] *Knaidles, Knishes and Then Some*.
[94] *Ahavath Achim Sisterhood Cookbook*, 64.
[95] *Daughters of Israel Cookbook*, 11.

York about "Atlanta brisket." He goes on to explain that Atlanta brisket is soaked in Coca-Cola overnight, then cooked with onion soup mix.[96] These combinations show the attempts of the Jewish community to hold onto some of their Jewish food traditions, but to continually adapt them to the surrounding culture.

One of the cookbooks includes personal stories and reflections, and individuals share their relationship to food while growing up as Jews in the South and, more specifically, in Atlanta: "For many southern Jews like Ellen Rollins, in whose home the cook was black, Jewish food became all mixed up—green tomatoes with kippers and grits, black-eyes peas served with kishka and schmaltz and red beans and rice and matzah meal–breaded southern fried chicken."[97] These combinations are the foods that generations of Jewish Southerners were raised on. Other stories add examples of "good southern pit barbeque and Brunswick stew with Kreplach in it," and "Jewish homemade gefilte fish and matzah balls with southern vegetables and fried chicken."[98] For many families, it was not about choosing to be Southern or Jewish but working to find some sort of amalgamation of the two.

Food is one important facet of a people's culture, and the cultural influence of the South on Jewish foodways is evident in the various cookbooks examined for this study. Jews had acculturated because they wanted to feel part of the regional lifestyle and culture, but they still held fast to some facets of their Jewish traditions through foods and holidays, as evidenced by each cookbook's inclusion of a Passover or holiday chapter. The cookbooks, stories, and recipes of the community members in Atlanta show not just the foods they cooked and ate, but the adaptation of ancient traditions and cultural past to a new home in the American South.

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[96] Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 301.
[97] Joan Nathan, *Jewish Cooking in America*, 226.
[98] Ibid.

Chapter 2: Boston

New England as a Region and Jewish Life Within It

Defining a region is more about culture than geography. When it comes to the Northeastern tip of the United States, one scholar defines the region as New England, grouping together the states above New York: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.[1] Another scholar suggests that the area around New York City be called New Netherland, and everything north of it, including most of the state of New York, be called Yankeedom.[2] Regardless of what it is called, this region has few natural resources: "Not only is New England unblessed agriculturally but it has precious little raw material and, with approximately thirteen million people, a diminished population."[3] This "unblessed" state has been true since the region's founding, unlike other regions that grew economically and gained a great number of immigrants due to natural resources or opportunities for growth and employment. The only tangible produce in this region is seafood, and even that is not a prized prospect : "Except for its proximity to the fishing riches of the Georges Bank, New England has sparse resource assets apart from the remnants of an industrialism that derived from the historical accident of first settlement."[4] While many enjoyed eating fish and seafood, being part of that workforce was often looked down upon.[5] New England was a center of elitism and at the core of it, the region "prides itself on being the only really civilized place in North America, a kind of

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[1] Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America*, 16.
[2] Woodard, *American Nations*, 256.
[3] Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America*, 19.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Keith Stavely and Kathleen Fitzgerald, *America's Founding Food: The Story of New England Cooking* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 2.

Athens of the continent."[6] This name, the "Athens of America," is tied in to the culture of Boston; it has been described as "the "nation's foremost seat of wisdom and learning," wherein "the typical query asking about someone in Boston was 'How much does he know?' In time, this became the city's defining characteristic in Jewish eyes as well."[7] At the core of this elitism is Greater Boston, with around sixty-five colleges and universities, including the oldest and possibly most prestigious—Harvard.[8] From the universities to the great number of authors, poets, and thinkers who came from this region, it is clear why New England boasts being "the "nation's foremost seat of wisdom and learning."[9]

Zooming In: Jewish Life and History in Boston

This notion that Boston is the leader of education and knowledge was not always true, and the city did not seem to appeal to many early settlers. The first Jewish person to live in Boston was "In 1668, Solomon 'Ye Malata Jew' of Boston," as he was known and even recorded in an early record.[10] He worked in cargo for the early colony. Only a small number of Jews lived in Boston over the next century or so. While there has been a small number of Jews in Boston from 1649 and throughout the colonial period, there were never enough people, nor was there enough drive, to build a strong Jewish community until late in the nineteenth century. Although Boston is a very historic city with a heritage that begins in the colonial period, the city did not host one of the original East Coast synagogues; its first, Kahal Kodesh Ohabei Shalom, was not built until 1842. Even in the 1840s and 1850s, when there was mass immigration from Central Europe to

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[6] Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America*, 16.
[7] "Boston, Massachusetts," Boston, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/boston.
[8] Ibid., 28.
[9] Jonathan D. Sarna et al., eds., *The Jews of Boston*, 14.
[10] Lee M. Friedman, "Boston in American Jewish History," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 42 (1953): 335.

the United States, not many immigrants came to Boston, possibly because "there was hardly any direct shipping between Boston and German ports catering to the carrying of emigrants. It was not until the eighteen-eighties and nineties that Boston and the state of Massachusetts in general received their great accretion of Jewish residents from Eastern Europe as the cruel pogroms of those days forced the Jews of Russia, Romania, and even Poland to flee their homes."[11] Thus, Boston's permanent Jewish community begins in the 1840s and does not become a major Jewish center until the arrival of the Eastern European immigrants in the 1880s and 1890s.[12] The reason for this has a great deal to do with the cultural norms of Boston and what settlers and immigrants were seeking: "[Jews] preferred more open and cosmopolitan cities where opportunities and foreign immigrants abounded—hence their affinity for New York and the cities on the frontier. Boston, by contrast projected an image of formidable homogeneity; for a time it held dubious distinction of being America's most homogenous city."[13] This homogeneity did not shift until a wave of Irish immigrants arrived during the early and mid-nineteenth century. This change, along with immigrants arriving from Southern Italy, began to transform the city.[14]

With the increase of Italians, Irish, and Jewish immigrants, the Jewish community finally began to organize itself. During the nineteenth century, most of the Jewish immigrants who landed in Boston came from either Polish or German territory. Two major synagogues existed in the mid-1800s to serve the needs of these two traditions. Kahal Kodesh Ohabei Shalom, Boston's first synagogue, retained a traditional Ashkenazic rite when many of its members broke away in 1854 to liberalize and Americanize the Jewish rite. The synagogue they established, Kahal Kodesh Adath Israel, was the first Reform congregation in Boston. During the post–Civil War

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[11] Ibid., 338.
[12] Sarna et al., eds., *The Jews of Boston*, 3–4.
[13] Ibid., 4.
[14] Woodard, *American Nations*, 6.

years, Ohabei Shalom became the larger of the two synagogues, but Adath Israel became known as the "only strictly Reform synagogue in Massachusetts. Reform Judaism, which had spread rapidly in many American [cities] did not spread as rapidly or as prominently in Boston. Reform Judaism did not become popularized until the turn of the 20th century for the Boston Jewish community."[15]

In addition to these distinctions, there was also a pronounced strain of conservatism in Boston from the influence of its Puritan heritage. As one historian noted: "Though probably only half the early colony's residents were Puritans, they dominated civic and church leadership."[16] This meant that for much of the nineteenth century, Boston's Jews were not involved in fields such as local politics or the arts.[17]

Later in the nineteenth century, certain populations still remained in control of civic life. Boston was a divided city in this way, and part of this was due to the fact that "in Boston, more than in other cities, politicians, priests, and policeman shared common family ties and common roots in Irish soil."[18] This not only set a standard for norms in the area, but it meant that Jews mainly stayed out of these fields and, instead, became quite insular, working in Jewish-owned and -run businesses. Many did not want to depend on government for any sort of welfare, but rather sought help and aid within the Jewish community[19]—a reflection of what the Jews of Boston saw the Irish and Italian communities doing. At the turn of the century, when a large wave of Eastern European Jewish refugees fled to the United States, the Jews of Boston "took great pride in the fact that not one member of the community had received city or state aid. The

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[15] Sarna et al., eds., *The Jews of Boston*, 5.
[16] Ellen Smith, "Strangers and Sojourners: The Jews of Colonial Boston" in *The Jews of Boston*, 21.
[17] Leon Huhner, "The Jews of New England (other than Rhode Island) prior to 1800," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* (United States: American Jewish Historical Society, 1903), need page numbers.
[18] Sarna et al., eds., *The Jews of Boston*, 11.
[19] William A. Braverman, "The Emergence of a Unified Community, 1880–1917" in *The Jews of Boston*, 77.

appearance in Boston of thousands of Russian Jewish immigrants entirely transformed the structure of the city's Jewish charities and opened up a new set of problems for the established Jewish community."[20] It was tough, but the Jews of Boston took care of their own, and their lack of participation in political and civic life meant that these new Jewish immigrants were their responsibility. The norm of the city was almost tribal in that way.

Throughout the twentieth century, many of these boundaries began to fall, but the Jewish community remained insular in many ways until the dawn of the 20th century. The new Jewish immigrants brought new attitudes about civic involvement: "Boston Jews also began to take their place side by side with the Yankee Protestant elite as leaders of the city's major cultural institutions, many of which had previously kept Jews out."[21] While they began to join the social and academic elite in the "Athens of America," they remained focused on the needs of the community, raising funds and starting charities to support Jewish people locally and overseas.[22]

Jewish Food of Boston: Sisterhood Cookbook Analysis

Just as the city and the Jews within it have shifted and changed with the times, the cookbooks that Jewish Boston produced follow many of these shifts and cultural norms. This chapter discusses five cookbooks, four of which come from synagogue sisterhoods, with the fifth published by the Boston section of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW). One of the sisterhoods is from a Conservative synagogue, while the other three are Reform; the NCJW cookbook adds a perspective that is not tied to one denomination. The cookbooks span from

[20] Ibid., 79.
[21] Leon A. Jick, "From Margin to Mainstream, 1917–1967" in *The Jews of Boston*, 77.
[22] Ibid, 93.

1909 to 1985 and offer a range of recipes, varied kashrut observances, and discussions on tradition.

The Universal Cookbook, written at the turn of the twentieth century, was produced by the Boston section of the NCJW, a grassroots Jewish women's organization that was founded in 1893. There were many sections across the country and, just like sisterhoods, they used cookbooks to raise funds and as a mark of shared community through food.[23] The cover page has an emblem with a Torah and a "ner tamid" (eternal light), and around it are the English words "Faith and Humanity." While the cover page is undeniably Jewish through symbols and words, the title of the cookbook is general and inclusive. Its preface begins: "Our little book does not claim to exhaust the subject of cookery; it rests with such noted cooks as Miss Parloa, Mrs. Lincoln and Aunt Babette to do that. We simply have touched the important lines, but we trust we have done well, and will give satisfaction to the members of our Council and all our friends."[24] By invoking the names Parloa, Lincoln, and Babette—the three major American cookbook authors of the time—the book establishes its connection to women and cooking traditions in America in general, while at the same time emphasizing its Jewish identity through the cover design.[25] Further, the structure and additions of the book feel more similar to works by these authors than to some of the sisterhood cookbooks, as it was not simply about food, but about life and the household. For example, the final chapter is titled "Valuable Household

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[23] "About Us - the National Council of Jewish Women," National Council of Jewish Women, March 1, 2023, https://www.ncjw.org/about/.

[24] Fannie Frank Phillips, et al., The Universal Cook Book: A Collection of Tried and Tested Home Receipts (Boston: Daniels Printing, 1909), 2.

[25] Maria Parloa (1843–1909) was an American author of cookbooks and housekeeping. She also founded two cooking schools. She has been referred to as "arguably America's first celebrity cook. See https://d.lib.msu.edu/content/biographies?author_name=Parloa%2C+Maria%2C+1843-1909. Mary Johnson Bailey Lincoln (1844–1921) also pioneered cookery in Boston, and proceeded to become a national figure and advocate of nutritional food. See Mary J. Lincoln, "The Pioneers of Scientific Cookery," *Good Housekeeping*, 51, no. 4, (October, 1910): 470–473. Aunt Babette is a nom de plume for Bertha F. Kramer and her cookbook was another early one for Jewish American publications with its first edition in 1889.

Hints." It contains pages upon pages of instructions for everything from removing stains to polishing floors to cleaning silver. The book also provides instructions for treating teething children and those with whooping cough, and it includes a few comical pages on how to make sure your husband is happy.[26] This section is truly about being the woman of the household. The same holds true for other chapters, such as the section on table decorations for events, including a wedding dinner, and one chapter simply titled "For the Chafing Dish," which offers recipes for large events and parties. The twenty-nine chapters in this cookbook are very specific and include some of the more predictable groupings—meats, vegetables, soups and cakes—and some more niche groupings—puddings, confectionaries, icing or cakes, salad dressings, and sandwiches. This cookbook covers everything from special occasions and festivities to the basics of a sandwich. Some of the phrasing denotes a shift into high society. While there are salad and soup chapters, there is also an "Hor D'oeuvre" and "Fish and Oyster" chapter; while there is a section on meats, there is also a chapter for the "Entrée." The French titles show how this cookbook is both a guide for daily life and an entryway into finer cooking and high society, at least within the Jewish community.[27]

This same approach may be discerned in the other four Boston cookbooks. In 1964 *The Gourmet Cookbook,* from a Reform synagogue's sisterhood, contains a chapter that similarly attempts to focus the reader on more than the day-to-day foodways. This includes directions for hosting dinner parties. There are sections that focus on party menus, hors d'oeuvres and appetizers, fancy molds and salads, fabulous fish, fancy fowl, and party cakes. It is certainly possible that these headings represent nothing more than an attempt at clever names; but it is also possible that the sections that lift up hosting and dinner parties constitute an attempt to help the

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[26] Fannie Frank Phillips, et al., *The Universal Cook Book*, 2.
[27] Fannie Frank Phillips, et al., *The Universal Cook Book*, 2.

reader emulate the food patterns of upper-crust American society. In other words, American Jews who make use of this book will be better equipped to create their own elite approach to food. This book also includes the day-to-day necessities of cooking, with sections on measurements and equivalents, a guide to oven temperatures, and helpful hints for successful cooking. There is one very unusual chapter: "Around the World Buffet," which offers recipes with French, Italian, Asian, and Israeli origins. Beyond the chapters and recipes within them, the book begins by listing the committee members and concludes with the "Sinai Sisterhood Donor Luncheon" menu and recipes. The sisterhood and people who put the book together are memorialized in the book itself.[28]

Another cookbook, titled *In the Best of Taste* and published in 1977 by the women's group at Beth El, a Reform synagogue just outside of Boston, has each recipe paired with the first and last name of the contributor. While this book does not have an introduction or much content other than recipes, it does open with a quote from the Book of Proverbs (31:27–28): "She looketh well to the ways of her household. And eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also and he praiseth her."[29] This quote not only praises women for their role in the family from a textual context, but also emphasizes how the work of the home is a Jewish value. The cover features a simple sketch of a Shabbat table, with candles, challah, and bowls at each seat. The chapters, on the other hand, are less distinctively Jewish, although, they are broken down to separate dairy and meatless entrees from all others, which seems to be a nod toward kosher practices.

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[28] *Sinai Temple Sisterhood Gourmet Cook Book* (Springfield, MA: Sinai Temple Sisterhood, 1964).
[29] *In the Best of Taste: A Holiday Guide and Cookbook with a Personal Touch* (Sudbury, MA: Congregation Beth El Women's Group, 1977), 1.

A very distinctive chapter in this cookbook is the section titled "Children's Recipes," which contains cute recipes such as fluffy pink fruit, chocolate gooey monsters, magic bard, and painted cookies. They are not all dessert recipes, but the six pages of the chapter make clear that part of the reader's role is to have fun cooking with their children.[30]

Similar to *In the Best of Taste*, the 1981 cookbook *Specialty of the House*, published by the sisterhood from the Reform Temple Israel, includes the full name of each contributor beside the recipes. Further, the importance of the sisterhood to the synagogue is emphasized, with the opening pages offering a letter from the rabbi that reads, "There is nothing more central to our lives than food, and good eating is a delight of the human experience."[31] Following this are some favorite recipes from the rabbi's kitchen, including challah and sour pickles. Next comes a letter from the president of the synagogue and the two women who edited the cookbook: "Mealtime is one of the occasions in a home that brings our families together. We feel that what is accomplished in the kitchen of each of our homes is truly important. The specialties prepared present the basis of pleasant and relaxed mealtimes for families and friends."[32] This highlights the important ethical values that undergird the act of people breaking bread together. On the inside cover page is a dedication not to one woman or a committee of women, but rather to "*eisheth chail*," to the "woman of valor," a Jewish reference to the woman of the house who holds a highly valued role in the Jewish home. While this makes the cookbook unique, several features are similar to the other cookbooks that have been mentioned. For example, the chapter titles—"Beautiful Breads," "Elegant Entrées," and "Grand Finales"—elevates the contents in a way similar to that used in *The Universal Cookbook*. And, as fish and seafood are so important to

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[30] Ibid., 208–213.
[31] *Specialty of the House* (Boston: Temple Israel Sisterhood, 1981), 1.
[32] Ibid., 2.

the foodways of Boston, the "Elegant Entrées" chapter is divided by fish, meat, and poultry, each given equal value and importance to the meal.[33]

A final sisterhood cookbook is the 1985, *Kosher Kuisine,* which comes from a Conservative congregation. This book focuses less on clever and elite-sounding chapter titles and more on kosher practices. The first few pages have a guide to keeping kosher—what is kosher; how to kasher meat so it is butchered in accordance with Jewish law; special foods, such as wine, cheese, and gelatin, and attendant notes from the Rabbinic Assembly; what constitutes pareve, including alternatives for milk and sour cream in recipes; and observance of Passover. Further, the chapters are grouped by meat, dairy, or pareve, and each recipe is marked D (dairy), M (meat) or P (pareve). This cookbook emphasizes upholding the practice of kashrut, i.e., maintaining Jewish law through food and the home, and kashrut will carry a specific meaning when it comes to discussing these cookbooks.[34] *Kosher Kuisine* is more direct than the other books, getting straight to the recipes and organizing by basic chapters, such as fish, eggs and cheese; meat and poultry; and desserts and breads. Otherwise, it contains similar features to the others, such as a first page that is an expression of gratitude from the cookbook committee for its members' submissions.

Jewish Food of Boston: Ingredients

The ingredients and items that typify Bostonian kitchens are those most Americans associate with Thanksgiving: "Our great annual American feast, Thanksgiving, perhaps provides the best example of … national cuisine based on historic New England cooking.… The nation still celebrates the day at the family table with roasted turkey, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie, all

[33] Ibid.
[34] *In the Best of Taste.*

foods long associated with the region."[35] Some even argue that the very act of creating the national holiday in 1863 was merely "a move to impose Yankee traditions on the South."[36] Two core ingredients from that holiday menu are found throughout the Boston sisterhood cookbooks, as well: corn and cranberries. Corn—and more specifically, corn muffins—have been a staple of the area since its founding. Corn has been a key part of the Boston diet for some time.[37] Throughout the United States, corn is grown differently in each region, according to "the strains that best suited their soils, climates, growing conditions, and tastes," but in Boston, it was most useful because if "dried, and kept free from moisture, corn can be stored indefinitely."[38] A crop that would keep throughout the season was especially helpful during Boston's harsh winters.

It is hardly surprising, then, that corn makes a prominent appearance in Jewish Boston cuisine and is used in a wide range of recipes in the sisterhood cookbooks. The cookbook from 1909, for example, includes recipes for corn, steamed corn bread, and corn muffins[39]; and this prominence holds true throughout the twentieth century. The sisterhood cookbook from 1964 has recipes for corn pudding, whole kernel corn, and fresh cut corn[40]; the one from 1977 has recipes for corn muffins and corn bread with yogurt[41]; and the one from 1985 has recipes for corn muffins and corn bread.[42] Corn is versatile and has stood the test of time. Corn is now grown throughout the entire East Coast of the United States and is eaten far beyond. But the early roots of corn is tied to settlers who learned from Native Americans and has continued as an American and Boston ingredient even today.

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[35] Stavely and Fitzgerald, *America's Founding Food*, 14.
[36] Nate Barksdale, "The History of Pumpkin Pie," History.com (A&E Television Networks, November 21, 2014), https://www.history.com/news/the-history-of-pumpkin-pie.
[37] Gabriel Lee, *Taste of the States*, 18–21.
[38] Stavely and Fitzgerald, *America's Founding Food*, 21.
[39] *The Universal Cookbook*, 45, 68.
[40] *Sinai Temple Sisterhood Gourmet Cook Book*, 48.
[41] *In the Best of Taste*, 85.
[42] *Specialty of the House*, 85.

Cranberries are another ingredient that is central to Boston cooking and appear on many Thanksgiving menus: "The cranberry is one of the few native American fruits, along with the blueberry and some grape varieties. Long before the pilgrims arrived, the Massachusetts Indians combined crushed cranberries with dried deer meat and melted fat to make pemmican."[43] Crushing cranberries and serving them with meat was taken on by earlier pioneers in what would be Massachusetts, and a massive cultivation of cranberries began as early as 1816 in Cape Cod, not far from Boston.[44] There are several variations of cranberry sauce recipes to be served with pot roast[45] and cranberry sauce for steaks.[46] Both of these follow the traditional use from records of Native American cooking. The sisterhood cookbook from 1985 contains a range of uses for cranberries, including cranberry Waldorf salad, cranberry cheese pie, and an "American Indian cranberry walnut sauce," which clearly pays homage and recognition to the history and impact of Native Americans.[47] While many recipes in the sisterhood cookbooks give credit to other people or places, the mention of the Native American Indian is somewhat unusual. Some recipes also bring this fruit into a common food of the era—gelatin-based molds, as there is a recipe for a cranberry mold in a 1977 cookbook.[48] It should also be noted that gelatin-based dishes have a lengthy culinary history, but with the invention of instant Jell-O in New York in 1897, it quickly became an American phenomenon.[49] Individuals and homes made versions that were uniquely local, such as this cranberry mold. Another notable recipe is for "Mock Cherry Pie," which uses

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[43] Pemmican is a paste of dried and pounded meat mixed with melted fat and other ingredients. See Gabriel Lee, *Taste of the States*, 18–21.
[44] Ibid.
[45] *Specialty of the House*, 113.
[46] *Sinai Temple Sisterhood Gourmet Cook Book*, 87.
[47] *Kosher Kuisine* (Olathe: Cookbook Publishers, Inc., 1985), 23.
[48] *In the Best of Taste*, 49.
[49] Judith Weinraub, "The Molding of America," *The Washington Post* (July 30, 1997), https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/food/1997/07/30/the-molding-of-america/c1952974-24e4-4c16-aa45-e5ad26e3b3a0/.

cranberries and raisins instead of cherries.[50] This indicates that cherries may have been desirable, but cranberries were much more accessible in Boston. Cranberries were used in everything from salads, to sauces for meats, to dessert pies.

The most important food items for this region are, without a doubt, fish and seafood. Fish found its way into nearly every meal in Boston: "At home the thrifty New Englanders found dozens of uses for cod, either fresh or dried or salted; they used cod to make fish cakes, chowder, boiled dinners, and fish hash.... In the 1700s a typical Sunday breakfast in Boston consisted of codfish cakes or creamed codfish, baked beans, and brown bread."[51] Cod may have been the most common fish, but Bostonians enjoyed every type of seafood that could be found on Massachusetts shores. This is seen even in the Jewish cookbooks, which, regardless of the year, all contain a specific fish chapter. Even in the earliest cookbook (1909), from Boston's chapter of the Council of Jewish Women,[52] there is a fish and oysters chapter that begins with a guide of when to eat various types of fish:

> Fresh Salmon is best in May.
>
> Pickerel is best September to January.
>
> Black bass is best in January to April.
>
> Carp is best October to April.
>
> Shad is best from March to May.
>
> Trout is good all year round.
>
> Lobster is best from May to September.

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[50] Fannie Frank Phillips, Reeva Huson Levy, Mollie Griswold Christian, Eugene Christian, and Council of Jewish Women, *The Universal Cook Book: A Collection of Tried and Tested Home Receipts* (Boston: Daniels Printing, 1909), 69.

[51] Gabriel Lee, *Taste of the States*, 18.

[52] While not a sisterhood nor affiliated with a specific synagogue in Boston, this is a community based, Jewish women's grassroots organization that was found at the end of the 19th century.

Oysters are best from September to April.[53]

This list tells the range of seafood that was consumed by the Jewish community, how they followed fishing patterns by what was best when, and how they completely disregarded laws of kashrut. While cod and many of the other fish are kosher, some of the common delicacies of Boston, such as lobster and oysters, most definitely were not. Seafood is core to Boston culture and cuisine, and each cookbook wrestles with the selection of shellfish differently. While this one accepts that people are probably eating whichever items they would like, another offers mock recipes. This includes mock lobster salad, which replaces the lobster with haddock or scrod, and a recipe for mock scallops, which includes halibut with a Ritz cracker stuffing.[54] There is also a recipe for mock crabmeat in the 1985 sisterhood cookbook, wherein the substitute is tuna with hard-boiled eggs and chopped pimento.[55] These show how even though Jewish households were not necessarily cooking nonkosher items, they were aware of them, and it was desirable to eat and serve some variation of them. In the 1985 cookbook, a chart is provided for substitutes, to give readers even more options:

When a recipe calls for:	Use:
Lobster	Haddock or Halibut
Scallops	Halibut chunks
Shrimp	Flounder fillets
Crab meat	Halibut

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[53] Fannie Frank Phillips, et al., *The Universal Cook Book*, 15.
[54] *Specialty of the House*, 135.
[55] *Kosher Kuisine*, 44.
[56] Ibid., 6.

Regardless of the nonkosher recipes or mock versions of them, the range of fish in these cookbooks is extensive, to say the least. In the 1909 cookbook, the fish chapter includes options for carp, mackerel, halibut, salmon, tuna, whitefish, and cod.[57] Some cookbooks do not list the specific fish, possibly to leave it up to what is available, seasonal, or appropriate to the cook's level of kashrut. In such a situation, the recipes titles include options such as fish stuffing, fish cakes, fish loaf, fish thermidor, fisherman's casserole, and fish souffle.[58] This is true in another of the cookbooks, which has recipes for Boston fish pier stew and a fish soup wherein the first ingredient is simply "a firm fish."[59] Here the relevance is not about the specific seafood item, but rather that there is a wide selection of options.

Jewish Food of Boston: Dishes

When it comes to dishes that were most common in Boston and therefore found in the sisterhood cookbooks, one recipe outweighs all the others: chowder. This soup not only is attributed to New England and more specifically to Boston, but it is a staple: "Symbolically, functionally, mnemonically or dynamically,... chowder has become a powerful means for New Englanders to define themselves as a community, a rich community, with a deep past and values that distinguish [the New England] region from all others."[60] Chowder roots itself simultaneously to the Northeastern Native Americans who made a version of it and to the early settlers who, while out on the shore and away on their ships, would make a soup out of used salt port, the ship's biscuits, and whatever they happened to catch that day.[61] It began as an easy hodgepodge of a

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[57] Fannie Frank Phillips et al., *The Universal Cook Book*, 15–28.
[58] *Specialty of the House*, 138–142.
[59] *Kosher Kuisine*, 24.
[60] Robert S. Cox and Jacob Walker, *A History of Chowder: Four Centuries of a New England Meal* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011), 15.
[61] Linda Stradley and Brenda Weller, "History of Chowder," What's Cooking America, December 21, 2016, https://whatscookingamerica.net/history/chowderhistory.htm.

stew and continued to develop. The first recorded recipe for chowder was "published in the *Boston Evening Post* on September 23, 1751, is very much recognizable as chowder, even to modern eyes, though it might look and taste like a distant relative to the modern plate."[62] There have been many versions of chowder since then, and the Jewish community in Boston cooked up its own versions. The 1981 sisterhood cookbook has a recipe for both a fish chowder and an oven fish chowder, whose base ingredients are haddock.[63] The 1985 one leaves it up to the chef/reader to decide what type of fish to use.[64] And the 1909 sisterhood cookbook lists the many options for the chowder, including clam, haddock, or halibut.[65] The adaptability of this stew gave permission for Jews of every generation to alter it for their own needs, but it still remained as chowder and thus connected the Jewish community to the local cuisine. This shift around nonkosher foods reveals a shift in perspective of kashrut. In 1909, Reform Jews would have been following the principles outlined in the Pittsburgh Platform, which showed no concern for dietary laws. At the end of the twentieth century, people became more cognizant of Jewish laws such as kashrut, and synagogues and community organizations may not have wanted the controversy that blatantly forbidden foods might have brought.[66]

In addition to fish and seafood, there are a few other items that hold a significant place on the Boston table. One that finds its home in nearly all the sisterhood cookbooks is the hearty meat dish pot roast. This is very literally just "a term for browned meat cooked with vegetables in a covered pot, [and it] began appearing in cookbooks in the late 19th century, but this method of slow cooking in liquid, known as *braising*, is centuries older."[67] Similar to chowder, this dish

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[62] Cox and Walker, *A History of Chowder*, 18.
[63] *Specialty of the House*, 49.
[64] *Kosher Kuisine*, 11, 14.
[65] Fannie Frank Phillips, et al., *The Universal Cook Book*, 7.
[66] Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 149–150.
[67] Tucker, Aimee. "Yankee Pot Roast: Recipe with a History." New England Today, April 6, 2018. https://newengland.com/yankee-magazine/food/main-dishes/pot-roast/yankee-pot-roast-beef-

has had many variations, which allows the Jewish community to cook it in the best manner for each family and individual. The meat used for pot roast is usually a tougher cut of meat, "such as beef chuck, short ribs, and brisket, lamb shanks, and pork shoulder, [which] are braising favorites because they're rich in marbled fat and connective tissue."[68] The authors of the sisterhood cookbooks took these possibilities and ran with them. *The Universal Cookbook,* from 1909, contains recipes for pot roast using beef bottom or round, and an option for pot roast fowl.[69] A 1964 cookbook has a dish titled "Old-fashioned Pot Roast," which uses brisket, onion soup mix, and tomato sauce.[70] This one is quite curious, as it calls for ingredients similar to brisket recipes found throughout the United States, rather than a pot roast. But the title and emphasis on its being "old-fashioned" emphasizes its importance to the historical identity of Boston, rather than to the Jewishness that is sometimes tied to brisket. The "New England Pot Roast" in the 1981 book also evokes a sense of Boston; it includes bottom roast as the main protein in the dish.[71] Each of these recipes shows that pot roast is core to the Boston Jewish household and a connector to the greater Boston foodways.

Two other classic Boston dishes can serve as a side dish to that pot roast: Boston brown bread and baked beans. The bread is a "moist, dark-brown bread of cornmeal, rye flour, molasses, buttermilk, and raisins [and] was steamed in cylindrical molds and served with the baked beans."[72] It began appearing on Boston tables in the 1800s, and some Jews integrated it into their kitchens. A recipe for Boston brown bread is found in the 1909 cookbook, and the

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gravy/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CPot%20roast%2C%E2%80%9D%20as%20a,as%20braising%2C%20is%20centuries%20older.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Fannie Frank Phillips, et al., *The Universal Cook Book*, 29, 32.

[70] *Sinai Temple Sisterhood Gourmet Cook Book* (Springfield, MA: Sinai Temple Sisterhood, 1964), 97.

[71] *Specialty of the House*, 114.

[72] Gabriel Lee, *Taste of the States*, 19.

ingredients align nicely with the above description.[73] Frequently the bread was paired with baked beans; while a simple dish, "Boston Baked Beans, as we know it today, descends from ancient pottage featuring protein-rich, slow-cooked, economical legumes" and were popularized during the colonial period along with "the introduction of molasses as a required ingredient."[74] Historians debate whether this style of cooking the beans came from Native Americans or from settlers from other countries, such as North Africa and/or parts of Spain. Regardless, baked beans have been on the menu in Boston for a long time: "A recipe for baked beans of this type was printed in Lydia Maria Child's 'The American Frugal Housewife' in 1832, though the term 'Boston baked beans' dates to the 1850s."[75] Baked beans are such a staple in Boston foodways that the city itself has gained the nickname "Beantown." From its beginnings and throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century, the name has stuck, and so has the dish.[76] While not specifically titled "Boston baked beans" in the sisterhood cookbooks, they appear in the 1909[77] and 1964[78] books, and both include the distinctive ingredient of molasses. This shows the influence of the food culture of Boston that spread throughout the tables, meals, and lives of Jewish people living in Boston.

Jewish Food of Boston: Putting the "Jewish" in Jewish Cookbooks

While the 1985 book emphasizes kashrut, many others offer mock recipes or more generically titled "fish chowder" or "seafood stew," making kosher optional. Kashrut is only the beginning

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[73] Fannie Frank Phillips, et al., *The Universal Cook Book*, 65.
[74] Stavely and Fitzgerald, *America's Founding Food*, 51–52.
[75] John F. Mariani, *The Encyclopedia of American Food and Drink* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 36.
[76] Andy Josiah. "Why Is Boston Called 'Beantown'?," United States Now, 2023, https://www.unitedstatesnow.org/why-is-boston-called-beantown.htm.
[77] Fannie Frank Phillips, et al., *The Universal Cook Book*, 51.
[78] *Sinai Temple Sisterhood Gourmet Cook Book*, 40.

of how these cookbooks displayed their Jewish character. As in other regions discussed in this paper, a common thread ran through every one of the Boston cookbooks: They all contain a Passover or holiday chapter. In the book from the conservative synagogue, B'nai Israel, near Boston, recipes in the holiday section range from hamantaschen to latkes, from honey cake to sponge cake and a matzah souffle.[79]

Another commonality that appears in all the volumes analyzed is the assumption that Ashkenazic food is Jewish food. This is certainly a consequence of the massive waves of Eastern European Jewish immigrants who came to the United States in the last decades of the nineteenth and first two decades of the twentieth centuries. Recipes for items such as brisket, blintzes, kugel, and tzimmes appear in all the Boston cookbooks except the earliest one, from 1909. This may be because that wave of immigration came after its publication. The only iconic Ashkenazi recipes in this cookbook are for kugel, liver, and tzimmes. It does, however, have a section on Passover containing recipes for sponge cake and matzah-based recipes.[80] This cookbook indicates that prior to 1909 seafood—kosher and unkosher alike—was more commonly consumed in Jewish homes than, for example, cabbage or brisket. These Boston cookbooks clearly demonstrate that Jews have been incorporating local foodways into their Ashkenazic traditions.

It is noteworthy that those cookbooks published after the Six Day War in the Middle East incorporate Israeli/Middle Eastern recipes. This suggests that over the last three decades of the twentieth century, the foodways of Israel/the Middle East have been used to reinforce the Jewishness of these cookbooks and the connection to the holy land and the food traditions that come with it. Thus, the 1977 sisterhood book from Beth El, a Reform synagogue, has a great

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[79] *Kosher Kuisine*.
[80] Fannie Frank Phillips, et al., *The Universal Cook Book*, 132-135.

number of Israeli dishes, including hummus, baba ghanouj, lentils and rice (imjadara), Israeli fruit frittes (for Chanukah), a Jaffe tort, kibbutz salad, tabouleh, and tabouleh salad.[81] The 1985 cookbook also includes a number of Middle Eastern recipes, such as tabouleh; a Turkish charoset in the Passover chapter that contains dates, cinnamon, walnut, and orange juice; and walnut cookies described as an "unusual Persian Passover delicacy."[82] This list of foods—and some unique spellings of them—are a means of the Jewish community of Boston connecting to their ancestral roots and to the modern Jewish State of Israel through food.

Each of these cookbooks also demonstrate how food traditions mark Jewish holidays and festivals. Two cookbooks—the ones from 1964 and 1977—offer readers a brief explanation about each of the Jewish holidays celebrated over the course of the year.[83] The other cookbooks failed to offer any explanation of the Jewish holidays. The 1977 book provides readers with many details about the holidays, followed by blessings and relevant biblical quotations. Toward the end of the volume, there is a subsection on the minor Jewish holidays and their meanings. There are suggested menus, which could be regarded as very Ashkenazi, such as a Rosh Hashanah menu of sweet wine, apples and honey, chopped liver on lettuce, roast brisket with potatoes, instant kishka (stuffed derma made with matzo meal, schmaltz, and spices), burgundy-glazed tomatoes, no-knead challah, taiglach (a traditional New Year's delicacy made of dough and sweetened with honey), and honey cake.[84] The Sukkot menu offers apple juice, stuffed cabbage, potato bilki (a pancake-like food that is composed by mixing together mashed uncooked potatoes, sautéed onions, eggs, and matzo meal), glazed carrots, strudel, and fancy dates and nuts for dessert. There are also menu options for the various days and seders of

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[81] *In the Best of Taste*, 20, 21, 77, 23.
[82] *Kosher Kuisine*, 23.
[83] *Sinai Temple Sisterhood Gourmet Cook Book.*
[84] Ibid., 170–176.

Passover. It is interesting to note that no Hebrew script appears in any of these cookbooks. Hebrew/Yiddish words are all rendered in an English transliteration.[85]

Conclusion

Boston's societal culture has been shaped by its insular communities and institutes of higher education. These institutes gave the people of the city a sense of elitism that poured into the Jewish communities and can be seen in the chapter titles and recipes in the cookbooks. For example, we do not find recipes for appetizers, but rather hors d'oeuvres. We do not find chicken recipes, but fancy fowl or entrées. These cookbooks are self-described as gourmet, even though they often include day-to-day recipes. The seafood industry and cuisine of Boston spread throughout many neighborhoods and communities, and the Jews of Boston wrestled with kashrut and adapting recipes to fit their lifestyle. While Jewish groups relate to the dietary laws differently, the trends in these cookbooks, as already discussed, show commonality, despite their being from a mix of Reform, Conservative, and community-based organizations. Even the cookbook from the Conservative synagogue that had the word "kosher" in it, *Kosher Kuisine*, contains a list of alternatives for items such as lobster, crab, shrimp, and scallops.[86] While insular in many ways, seafood carries a weight of both elitism—by enjoying items such as lobster and oysters—and commonality—by using commonplace fish such as cod and haddock. The ingredients, dishes, and cookbooks themselves show the way the Jewish people of Boston ate, lived, and adapted to cultural norms in the region.

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[85] *Kosher Kuisine*.
[86] Ibid., introductory pages.

Chapter 3: Los Angeles

The West as a Region and Jewish Life Within It

Defining a region is difficult for every part of the United States, but the West is one that has neither clear lines nor names. What researchers agree upon, however, is that the West Coast is a radically different culture than the rest of the western United States (such as Montana, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada). Even within the West Coast, the northern portion—which writer Joel Garreau dubbed "Ecotopia"[1] and his colleague Colin Woodward called "the Left Coast"[2]—is distinct; and both researchers agree that the coast along Southern California and dipping into parts of the Southwest constitute its own region, which Garreau called "MexAmerica"[3] and Woodward titled "El Norte."[4] Most agree that Los Angeles is the focal point of this region, "the second-largest metropolitan area in the United States of America … [and] the second largest Mexican city in the world after Mexico city, with at least 1.5 million American citizens of Mexican heritage, and an estimated half-million more illegal immigrants."[5] This characteristic dates back to the city's beginnings. Los Angeles was founded in 1781 as a Spanish town, and "it continued for many years under Spanish and then Mexican rule and as a small town comprised of Spanish, Indian, black and racially mixed population."[6] Thus, the Mexican cultural impact on the identity of Los Angeles is seen in various modalities, including in the foodways of the metropolitan area.

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[1] Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America*, 11.
[2] Woodard. *American Nations*, 256.
[3] Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America*, 207.
[4] Woodard. *American Nations*, 257.
[5] Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America*, 211.
[6] Neil C. Sandberg, *Jewish Life in Los Angeles: A Window to Tomorrow* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 26.

Another key characteristic of Los Angeles is that is has always been a home to immigrants and has embodied the ideas of freedom and independence: "On the Left Coast and in the Far West, being 'American' was never about being Protestant or being descended from English or British 'stock'; rather it was about embracing individual achievement and pursuing the 'American Dream'."[7] California, along with so much of the West, was the new frontier for many Americans—a land of prospect and of possibility. Immigrants sought opportunities in large cities such as New York, but in California, the gold rush inspired an even deeper feeling—that anyone of any background could *strike gold* here.[8] The East Coast talked about it, but on the West Coast (or Left Coast), it rang true for many. Further, it was a place where there was no clear cultural norm, other than possibly the Mexican influence; this left a great amount of space for a rise of individualism and for immigrants to maintain their identities, rather than focus on assimilation.

Thus, when a great wave of immigration impacted Los Angeles and all of this region in the 1880s, "the Left Coast and Far West were still in infancy, so in these areas many immigrant groups had as much cultural leverage as their native competitors; here *everything* was new, and cultural groups compete with one another to shape society."[9] Unlike other U.S. regions, people on the West Coast leaned into their identities and cultures and blended together, rather than attempting to isolate or fit into one singular idea of being American. With Los Angeles's adherence to newness and cultural diversity, combined with its near monopoly of the film and movie industry, the city in many ways has shaped what it is to be American: "The majority of images of who we are—and why—come out of this world television-and-film capital," and it

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[7] Woodard. *American Nations*, 257.
[8] Rudolf Glanz, *The Jews of California* (New York: Waldon Press, 1960), 1.
[9] Woodard, *American Nations*, 257.

"has influenced continental thinking on the worth of everything from casual sex to fresh foods."[10] The impact Los Angeles has had on other parts of the country is seen in all forms of media today, but the way the cultural norms affected the people of the area are evident in its culture—and can be seen in the city's distinctive foodways.

It should also be noted that unlike other cities analyzed in this study, Los Angeles only became a major metropolitan in the twentieth century. Its quick growth was due to a number of factors, including the railroad industry, which brought people from the East to the West; the explosive growth of the motion picture industry; the discovery of oil and the growing importance of this resource to the transportation industry; and manufacturing in Los Angeles, which led to the production of rubber, steel, food processing, and the automobile.[11] With so much rapid change and development, people flooded to the area from all over in search of economic opportunity.

Zooming In: Jewish Life and History in Los Angeles

The story of Jewish life in Los Angeles follows a similar tale to other immigrants coming to the city. The city was originally a pioneering community that held great opportunity but also many hardships. As the community grew, "there were similar opportunities for involvement in the growth of the social, economic, and political milieu in a place that was not constrained by the rigid historical and cultural patterns of the society."[12] People of varied backgrounds, including Jews, had access to these various parts of life, since the city lacked the norms established by European colonials in other cities on the East Coast. Instead, the lives of the early Jewish settlers

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[10] Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America*, 218.
[11] "Los Angeles," Jewish Virtual Library (Encyclopedia Judaica/ Gale Group, 2008), https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/los-angeles.
[12] Sandberg, *Jewish Life in Los Angeles*, 25.

in Los Angeles "were intertwined with the expansion and development of the region in opening up the frontier and pioneering in business, science and the arts."[13]

The first Jews in the area came around the 1850s and were merchants, primarily from Germany. Throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, Jewish settlers of California came from all Jewish communities along the East Coast, as well as the South and Midwest, too: "Thus east and west, north and south, native-born Americans and newly arriving Jews merged in California."[14] Los Angeles had a great mix of immigrants, including Jews, who came from a variety of places within the United States. At the beginning of the gold rush in California, "a surge of Jews from Western Europe and the Eastern U.S." made their way to region; however, "the majority did not engage in gold mining but [rather] opened stores in the small towns and mining camps of northern California."[15] One of these early settlers was Joseph Newmark (1799–1881), who was "rabbinically trained and traditionally oriented," and he quickly became "the patriarch of the Jewish community until his death."[16] He led some of the earliest prayer services and High Holy Day services in Los Angeles, and he was one of the founders of the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Los Angeles. Newmark also helped to establish the first Jewish cemetery in Los Angeles.[17] As the community grew, it began organizing itself, first with "Congregation B'nai Brith, which had served the entire community since 1861 [and] was joined by the first Orthodox congregation, Beth Israel or the 'Olive Street Schul.' [Then] in 1906 Congregation Sinai, the first Conservative congregation was organized and built its first edifice three years later."[18] Congregation B'nai Brith, the earliest synagogue, changed locations and buildings a few times throughout its history,

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[13] Ibid.
[14] Glanz, *The Jews of California*, 5.
[15] "Los Angeles," Jewish Virtual Library (Encyclopedia Judaica/ Gale Group, 2008), https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/los-angeles.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

and, in the 1880s, it began adopting principles and practices of the Reform movement. The synagogue continued to grow into the twentieth century, eventually building summer camps in Malibu and later changing its name after its new location—Wilshire Boulevard Temple.[19] This synagogue and other major institutions have had great impact on the culture of Jewish life in Los Angeles. Its transition as a Reform temple, though, reflects both the era and the spirit of the city, wherein secularism became popular: "Many Los Angeles Jews abandoned ritual and tradition under the impact of secularism, but they did not necessarily break with the ethnic or folk traditions that continued to prevail in the Jewish community."[20] One way the influence of secularism has manifest itself is in the food culture of the Jewish community. Los Angeles's Jews evinced less interest in Jewish ritual, but they did strive to uphold elements of Jewish culture, including many food traditions (even though most Jewish Angelenos declined to maintain the traditional laws of kashruth.) The foodways of the Jews of Los Angeles, as seen through the sisterhood cookbooks examined in this chapter, emphasize this transition, as well as the blend of multiculturalism that came with the regional norms of the metropolitan area.

Jewish Food in Los Angeles: Sisterhood Cookbook Analysis

In researching five sisterhood cookbooks from Los Angeles synagogues, much is revealed about the food culture and value of cooking for this Jewish community. Four of the cookbooks are from Reform temples, and the fifth is from a Conservative synagogue. While all of these cookbooks are associated with sisterhoods, the shared and distinctive features in each of them will reveal values and norms within the communities.

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[19] "Our History." Our History - Wilshire Boulevard Temple. 2017. https://legacy.wbtla.org/pages/the-temple-pages/our-history.
[20] Sandberg, *Jewish Life in Los Angeles*, 37.

The cover of a 1960 cookbook from Reform Temple Israel of Hollywood's sisterhood shows a winking man in a chef's hat sprinkling something into a bowl with steam coming off it. Its title is *Add a Pinch.* This generic title and cover page could be a cookbook for any people of any background—there is nothing explicitly Jewish about it. Its overall design seems more like a household keepsake than a cookbook. It is bound together in a binder with tabs for each section. At the beginning are a few sentences thanking people for contributions and a signature by the sisterhood president. Other than the note about sisterhood, there is very little to indicate the cookbook's Jewishness. There is no chapter dedicated to Jewish holiday foods—not even one on Passover. There are, however, some recipes for Jewish holiday foods sprinkled throughout. This cookbook contains recipes for nonkosher ingredients, such as shrimp, and a section for hosting parties titled "To Serve 100 People." It is a cookbook designed for a host, as it also includes added hints and tips on making dishes and tables look prettier.[21]

The next cookbook, titled *A Taste of Goodness* and published in 1973 by another Reform synagogue, is starkly different from the one above. The cover of this collection says "Temple Jeremiah" on it and includes a dedication, noting that this is "a cookbook to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of our Temple Jeremiah home."[22] This cookbook is not just about food or hosting people, but about the connection that members have to their synagogue community. The dedication page says, "We dedicate our book to all our wonderful women, who find happiness and a sense of accomplishment in creating a Jewish home, a beautiful home, a home that strives to be worthy of our heritage."[23] From the very first page, this cookbook is about instilling Jewish heritage and culture through the domestic work of women. It goes on to list

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[21] Temple Israel of Hollywood, and Sisterhood of Temple Israel, *Add a Pinch (*Hollywood, Calif.: Sisterhood of Temple Israel of Hollywood, 1960), 95.
[22] *A Taste of Goodness* (Kansas City, KS: Temple Jeremiah, 1973), 2.
[23] Ibid.

favorite recipes and the names of the committee members; and beside the recipes appears the name and residential area of the contributors—which includes the rabbi and cantor. This cookbook values the individual as part of the great temple community. There are a few recipes that lack a name, but simply notify the reader that a specific recipe comes "from our sisterhood files." These words appear next to the anonymous recipes.[24]

Another sisterhood cookbook, this one from 1978 and titled *A Lovin' Spoonful*, also pays homage to its community. Again, the first page is an "Expression of Appreciation" that features a paragraph of gratitude toward not only the contributors, but to the editors and the family and friends who enjoy the recipes. There are also first and last names next to every recipe, and at the beginning of the book there are helpful tips such as measurement conversions and suggested temperatures for cooking specific items. This cookbook is kosher without explicitly stating it, and it includes a Passover dishes section. The final chapter is simply titled "Important People" and includes recipes such as Bob Hope's lemon pie and Fred MacMurrary's pumpkin pie. This extra section brings celebrities and public figures into the kitchen, extending the sense of community.[25]

The attention to the community is consistent in each of these Los Angeles sisterhood cookbooks. A 1979 one follows the same trends as the previous two, opening with gratitude from the husbands, families, and friends who have tested the recipes. It continues with a list of the cookbook committee members. Although it isn't stated explicitly, one can immediately discern that the book does not follow dietary laws. Almost every chapter contains nonkosher ingredients. The fact that the cookbook makes no reference to the recipes' being nonkosher suggests that this would not take the users, contributors, or community members by surprise. It not only leans into

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[24] Ibid.
[25] *The Lovin' Spoonful Cookbook* (Woodland Hills, CA: Temple Emet Sisterhood, 1978), 141–149.

the nonkosher dishes but adds in something that fits the California character: a "Pot Pourri" chapter, which addresses the need for cooking while camping and backpacking. This section includes recipes for turkey jerky, backpacking pastries, granola cereal, and a dish consisting of canned tuna, peas, rice.[26] Apparently, being in the outdoors and being able to cook for such occasions is part of the Los Angeles character. In addition to this unique feature, the cookbook also adds a traditional feature: a Passover chapter with explanations of each of the items on a seder plate and a traditional seder menu, including gefilte fish, hard-cooked eggs, chicken soup and matzah balls, oven-baked chicken or beef brisket, matzah kugel, tzimmes, and sponge cake. Although this book includes many nonkosher, non-Jewishly traditional items, it reminds readers that Passover is the key Jewish food-related occasion.[27]

On the other hand, the 1986 cookbook from Wilshire Boulevard Temple, a Reform synagogue, seems to return to tradition. The setup of the book is curious, as the first few pages contain explanations of many Jewish holidays and rituals—including "The Sabbath," "The Blessing Over the Lights," and "The Kiddish"—followed by prayers written only in English and transliterated Hebrew. That these are included shows a transition from the sisterhood cookbooks that did not mention Jewish rituals or any explicit reference to Judaism, as this cookbook goes far in the opposite direction; rather than a standard dedication page, the first page is blazoned with a large picture of the temple and a brief history of the building. While this cookbook does add contributors' first and last names next to each recipe, it is more focused on its connection to Judaism and the synagogue itself. It contains a number of unusual features that do not appear in the other books. There are helpful hints, clean-up tips, and a spice guide at the beginning of each

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[26] Temple Beth Hillel, *We Like to Cook Book* (North Hollywood, CA: Sisterhood of Temple Beth Hillel, 1979), 193–196.
[27] Ibid., 197–212.

chapter. There is a calorie counter in the back, wherein every recipe is listed in order with the number of calories next to it.[28]

Jewish Food of the Los Angeles: Ingredients

Much of the fresh produce in California finds its roots in the region's historic connection to Mexico and its Spanish influence: "The Spanish introduced many foods to California via Mexico; these included: almonds, apples, apricots, bananas, barley, beans, cherries, chickpeas, chilies, citrons, dates, figs, grapes, lemons, lentils, limes, maize, olives, nectarines, oranges, peaches, pears, plums, pomegranates, quinces, tomatoes, walnuts, wheat, chickens, cows, donkeys, goats, horses, sheep and domesticated turkey."[29] Looking at the five cookbooks in this analysis, it is clear how these ingredients appear as commonplace. Some—such as barley, dates, figs, pomegranates, and wheat—are difficult to discern, as they were part of Jewish cuisine already. Yet, prior to the end of the twentieth century, when a wave a Sephardi and Mizrachi Jews immigrated to the United States—primarily to the West coast[30]—much of Jewish cuisine did not contain the foods from these regions, which happen to grow well in California. For example, dates and figs, which have long been a core part of the Middle Eastern diet, were uncommon in other regions of the United States during this period, whereas they were much more common in Los Angeles, appearing in "Fruit Candy for Passover"[31] and "Date and Nut Bread."[32] California raisins, too, appear in raisin breads[33] and traditionally Jewish foods such as

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[28] *Food for My Household: Second Helpings* (Los Angeles, CA: Sisterhood, and Wilshire Boulevard Temple, 1986), vi–viii.
[29] Andrew F. Smith, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 166.
[30] "Los Angeles," Jewish Virtual Library (Encyclopedia Judaica/ Gale Group, 2008).
[31] *The Lovin' Spoonful Cookbook*, 119.
[32] *Food for My Household: Second Helpings*, 75.
[33] Ibid., 75.

haroset and rugalach.[34] Raisins are believed to have been brought over from Spain by the missionaries who "used grapes for sacramental wines and also grew Muscat grapes for raisins."[35] There is also an idea that raisins grew plentifully in California when, in the 1870s, "a massive heat wave hit the valley before harvest, and most of the grapes dried on the vine before farmers could pick them."[36] From the 1800s onward, grapes and, later, raisins have become so core to California cuisine, cooking, and agriculture that today "The area now supplies raisins for nearly half the world, making it the largest producer anywhere."[37]

Like raisins, a number of other crops have come to dominate Southern California's agricultural output. The avocado, for instance, had been common throughout various regions in Mexico. One man brought several avocado trees from Mexico to the United States in the 1870s and began growing and researching the best varieties.[38] The land in California was incredibly fertile, and the avocado trees flourished. Many Californians, including those in the Jewish community, enjoyed this new crop. One cookbook, published in 1973, has recipes for a Mexican chef's salad and Topopos (a type of chicken salad) that include avocadoes, meat, beans, and tortillas.[39] Another cookbook enhanced the popular gelatin mold with avocados,[40] and avocados appear in many of the Mexican dishes, including in tacos, quesadillas, casseroles, and many more. Like raisins, the taste for and interest in avocados spread throughout the United States and today, "California is the leading producer of domestic avocados and home to about 90 percent of the nation's crop."[41]

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[34] Ibid., 103.
[35] "History." California Raisins, 2023. https://calraisins.org/about/the-raisin-industry/history/.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] "Avocado History - Origin of Avocado," California Avocados, 2023, https://californiaavocado.com/avocado101/the-history-of-california-avocados/.
[39] *A Taste of Goodness*, 3.
[40] *The Lovin' Spoonful Cookbook*, 20.
[41] "Avocado History."

Pistachio nuts are yet another indigenous food that is largely produced in California. Like other Southern Californians, members of the Jewish community have embraced the pistachio. Originally, the pistachio was native to the Middle East and Mediterranean. In the late 1800s, "imported pistachios were popular in the USA, especially with Middle Eastern immigrants," and they increased in popularity as they began appearing in "vending machines installed in underground train stations, bars, restaurants and other common locations."[42] Like raisins and avocadoes, pistachios grown in California found a great deal of success throughout the twentieth century until today, where "the states of California, Arizona and New Mexico represent 100 percent of the U.S. commercial pistachio production."[43] Thus, like the other foods being grown successfully in California, pistachios appear in a wide range in Los Angeles cooking. One of the cookbooks in this study includes a recipe for a pistachio salad,[44] while others recipes include desserts with the nut as the focal point, such as a pistachio bundt cake[45] and pistachio pudding.[46]

Jewish Food of Los Angeles: Dishes

The story of Los Angeles and of California's relationship to its Spanish history is evident in the dishes found in these five cookbooks, which incorporate items such as tacos, salsas, and enchiladas. For example, there is a recipe for chili relleno (stuffed pepper) in both a 1978[47] and 1979[48] cookbook. The stuffed chili pepper is a traditional dish from both Mexican and Spanish

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[42] "History - Pistachio Origins." History | American Pistachio Growers, 2017. https://americanpistachios.org/growing-and-harvesting/history.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Temple Beth Hillel, *We Like to Cook Book* (North Hollywood, CA: Sisterhood of Temple Beth Hillel, 1979), 164.
[45] *A Taste of Goodness*, 161.
[46] *Food for My Household: Second Helpings*, 22.
[47] *The Lovin' Spoonful Cookbook*, 67.
[48] *We Like to Cook Book*, 65.

cuisine.[49] The Mexican influence is also apparent in the titles of many of the dishes: The 1973 cookbook includes a "Mexican Chef's Salad,"[50] the 1979 one contains "Mexican Meat Tartlets," "Mexican Rice Casserole," and "Mexican Strata,"[51] and the 1985 book offers "Gazpacho—Cold Mexican Soup," "Mexican Lentil Soup," and "Sopa Pollo Mexicana—Mexican Chicken Soup."[52] Adding "Mexican" to the title reads almost as an homage and a clear indicator that these dishes are not inherently part of the Jewish cuisine. Although these recipes are core to the kitchens and cuisine of Los Angeles Jews, the titles emphasize that they are still separate from the Jewish food traditions.

Another major cultural impact on the foodways of Los Angeles has been the Asian community. Today, "the largest group of Asian Americans live in California making up 15% of the population," which began during the 1800s and has grown immensely since then.[53] During the gold rush, many Chinese immigrants came to Southern California in search of economic opportunity, and many came to work as miners. The population grew throughout the twentieth century, coming from Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Many of these communities maintained their traditions throughout the history of Los Angeles.[54]

Not surprisingly, the impact of Asian immigrants can be seen in the cuisine of the Jewish communal cookbooks. Many dishes are labeled generically, such as "Oriental Short Ribs" and "Oriental Chicken Salad."[55] Another book includes "Oriental Spinach Soup," "Chicken Salad Oriental," "Oriental Pasta Salad," and "Oriental Tuna Noodle Salad," which includes chow mein

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[49] "The History of Mexican Chile Rellenos," eHow (Leaf Group), accessed February 22, 2023, https://www.ehow.com/about_5373467_history-mexican-chile-rellenos.html.
[50] *A Taste of Goodness*.
[51] *We Like to Cook Book*, 5.
[52] *Food for My Household: Second Helpings*, 9; 14.
[53] Dirkan Seferian, "The History of Asian Americans in California," California.com (California Voices, 2022), https://www.california.com/the-history-of-asian-americans-in-california/.
[54] Ibid.
[55] *We Like to Cook Book*, 124, 164.

noodles and curry powder as main ingredients.[56] Some of the cookbooks get more specific and include an actual country—most often China, as that is where many of the Asian immigrants in Los Angeles were from. The sisterhood cookbooks range in their recipes under this country's title, including "Tomato, Green pepper, Beef Chinese style" and "Tuna and Chinese Scallops."[57] The cookbook from 1978 contains "Chinese Pepper Steak," "Chinese Rice," and "Mandarin Beef Ribs."[58] The 1985 book has a "Vegetarian Chinese Salad," "Chinese Chicken Salad," and "Chinese Green Salad."[59] Similar to the dishes that explicitly say Mexican, these Asian and Chinese titled foods testify to the fact that they were commonly cooked and consumed in Jewish homes, but recognized to be from other regions of the world. These recipes show that, while these were not explicitly Jewish dishes, Jews enjoyed them, and they were part of the Los Angeles kitchen. In addition, all of these cookbooks contained recipes for Asian dishes, such as chow mein, lo mein, teriyaki, won tons, and chop suey. More than anything, these dishes reflect the metropolitan area as an immigrant-focused cuisine and an integrated food culture.

Jewish Food in Los Angeles: Putting the "Jewish" in Jewish Cookbooks

The Jewishness of the Angeleno cookbooks display a fusion of recipes and tastes. While there are many Ashkenazi items—such as cabbage-based dishes, blintzes, chopped liver, and brisket—there are several recipes for Jewish holidays that evince the influence of the regional cuisine. For example, one of these cookbooks includes a recipes for "Mexican Strata," which uses matzah meal to craft "matzah tortillas" to replace corn or wheat tortillas, which Jews are forbidden to eat on Passover. The recipes also combine various foods to make each dish, such as the

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[56] *Food for My Household: Second Helpings*, 10, 17, 25.
[57] *A Taste of Goodness*, 20.
[58] *The Lovin' Spoonful Cookbook*, 30, 36, 75.
[59] *Food for My Household: Second Helpings*, 17–18.

"Quishada," which combines a quiche (a French egg tarte filled with varies ingredients), a quesada (a Spanish cheesecake), and Passover ingredients.[60] There is also a "Matzo Brie Foo Yong," which contains green pepper, bamboo shoots, and scallions.[61] The kugel, while found in Jewish cookbooks across the United States, has even more variations in these cookbooks, which add many kinds of local produce. One cookbook has fourteen different kugel recipes, which incorporate everything from golden raisins, to apples, pineapple, potato, or cornflakes.[62] Another features ten kugel options, six of which use raisins and one that calls for California Pippin apples.[63]

Like the sisterhood cookbooks from other cities, the Los Angeles cookbooks find a common thread in having a Passover or holidays chapter. These collections include a "Traditionally Jewish Assorted Recipes" section.[64] There are many commonalities between the Los Angeles cookbooks and those from the South and from Boston, but the Los Angeles cookbooks are somewhat distinct in their approach to kashrut. While some appear to avoid recipes that contain blatantly nonkosher foods such as crustaceans and pork, two of the books include them. The volume published in 1979 has dishes such as a "Party Shrimp Casserole, "Shrimp Scampi," "Minnie's Shrimp Italian," "Crab Mold," and "Crab Roll."[65] The range of nonkosher items throughout the cookbooks suggests that some members of the Jewish community fused not only Jewish recipes with other cultures, but they were also willing to include unmistakably nonkosher foods in their collection of recipes.

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[60] *We Like to Cook Book*, 103–111.
[61] *Food for My Household: Second Helpings*, 104.
[62] Ibid., 106.
[63] Need source.
[64] *A Taste of Goodness*, 81–96.
[65] *We Like to Cook Book*, 8–9, 65.

Conclusion

The five sisterhood cookbooks from Los Angeles show some trends that align with the cultural norms of the area. First, ingredients such as grapes, raisins, pistachios, and avocados all show the modern and historical agricultural side of California. The largest impact, though, throughout the recipes, ingredients, and even in the design of the books themselves is that Los Angeles is a multicultural and highly secularized environment. In the twentieth century, the metropolitan area "had ceased to be a European outpost and was now a multi-racial world nation." By the mid-1900s, "some 75% of the immigrants were Hispanic, Asian, and black [and] by the end of the 1980s, 51% of Los Angeles residents were Hispanic or nonwhite."[66] These demographics and the cultural impact clearly influenced the cuisine of the Jewish community, which included many types of Asian and Hispanic ingredients as well as recipes that incorporated the tastes and smells of local food customs. The cookbooks examined in this chapter reflect an unhesitating openness to foods that were traditionally considered forbidden. They also reveal a profound inclination within the Jewish population of Los Angeles to amalgamate the foodways that dominated in that region. Based on the cookbooks examined for this study, the Jewish cuisine of Los Angeles appears as a true melting pot of the many different cultures that influenced the community at large.

[66] "Los Angeles," Jewish Virtual Library (Encyclopedia Judaica/ Gale Group, 2008).

Chapter 4: Cincinnati

The Midwest as a Region and Jewish Life Within It

In his much-discussed volume that examines regional history and culture in America, Joel Garreau refers to the Midwest as the "Foundry."[1] This title is based on the region's various resources as well as the great number of cities that span from Michigan to Minnesota, down to West Virginia and Kentucky. The Midwest's resources are equally expansive. They run the gamut from steel to coal to limestone. "But best of all," Garreau notes, "the water-rich Foundry was laced with navigable waterways ranging from the Great Lakes to the Ohio River to the Erie Canal, and, to this day, water is still the cheapest way to move heavy, bulky items."[2] The Foundry is a name that symbolizes the region's many natural resources and the water ways that facilitate transportation. The Midwest is a founding place not only for early American settlements, but also for the raw materials that the United States has depended upon to grow and flourish throughout its history. With so many natural resources comes hard work, so "tough is what defines North America's nation of midwestern gritty cities in a multitude of ways," where these various cities throughout the region require "heavy work with heavy machines."[3] This also goes back to the history of places along the Ohio River, which originally were gateway hubs to the West and functioned as early frontier towns that later became cities. Cincinnati is one such example. Frontier cities such as Cincinnati had to develop a pioneer grit—a certain level of toughness and hard work that has carried through to the culture of this region. Cutting through

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[1] Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America*, 49.
[2] Ibid., 68.
[3] Ibid., 57.

that hard external shell, there is also a "culture of respectability … throughout the Ohio River Valley, as it shared in the bourgeois regional culture of the trans-Appalachian West."[4]

Jews originally came to these early pioneer towns seeking economic opportunity. They took in this culture of both respectability and hard work. The region, which includes cities along the major water ways and which is connected to the major resources, served as a frontier for Jews in more ways than one: "The Ohio River Valley was a Jewish frontier—a borderland—long after it ceased to be a national frontier.... In the valley's cities, Jews experienced their own frontier of Jewish-gentile contact through participation in the [region's] market and in the civic life of Ohio River Valley cities and towns; they organized their environment into a place they could call home."[5] The region's culture not only shaped the Jews living here, but it also shaped the future of American Judaism. With the ideals of living in the borderlands and the Foundry, this region functioned "as a Jewish frontier both sociologically and psychologically; the nineteenth century Ohio River Valley was an important locus for the creation of the American Jewish Identity."[6]

Zooming In: Jewish Life and History in Cincinnati

The culture of this region is embedded primarily in its cities, and one where the Foundry and Ohio Valley intersect is Cincinnati. As a frontier city, many early immigrants and pioneers came to the city seeking economic opportunity: "During the 19th century, thousands of Jews migrated from Germany to the new republic."[7] In this tidal wave of immigrants there were many Jews

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[4] Amy Hill Shevitz, *Jewish Communities on the Ohio River: A History* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 84.
[5] Ibid., 10.
[6] Ibid., 27
[7] John S. Fine and Frederic Krome, *Jews of Cincinnati* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2007), 9.

who immigrated to Cincinnati. Throughout the mid-1800s, the wave of central European immigrants grew exponentially, and this impacted the culture, norms, and growth of Cincinnati. Many immigrants began as peddlers and soon rose to become shopkeepers and grow their businesses in the city.[8]

With the growth of industry among the Jewish population came Jewish communal growth. The first long-term Jewish resident in Cincinnati was Joseph Jonas (1792–1869), who was a silversmith and watchmaker. Like so many others in the city, he worked hard and was committed to investing in the area. He "was also one of the founding members of KK Bene Israel (known today as Rockdale Temple), the oldest congregation west of the Alleghenies."[9] Jewish institutional life grew rapidly in Cincinnati in the nineteenth century. Multiple synagogues were founded, as was a Jewish communal school. Jewish communal life became heavily location based, with many of the Jewish citizens living in the same few neighborhoods. This rapid growth and hard-working nature contributed to the city's culture and the way business was conducted. These characteristics manifest themselves in the vitality of Cincinnati's Jewish life.

"Cincinnati played a vital role in the development of Reform Judaism in the United States."[10] Isaac Mayer Wise came to the city in 1854 and brought with him a great sense of organizing. He played a central role in the creation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) in 1873 and two years later (1875) the Hebrew Union College (HUC).[11] These organizations united liberal synagogues throughout the country to join in an association of Jewish congregations that would attend to the future of Jewish life and rabbinic education in the

[8] Jonathan D. Sarna, *The American Jewish Experience*, 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1997), 69.
[9] Fine and Krome, *Jews of Cincinnati*, 10.
[10] Ibid., 21.
[11] Ibid.

United States, and they emphasized Cincinnati's role as cornerstone of Reform Judaism throughout the nation.

The Reform movement led by Wise pushed new ideas of what an American Judaism could be—and pushed them in a very public way, particularly at what came known as the "Trefa Banquet": "To celebrate the ordination of HUC's first four graduates, the UAHC sponsored a banquet in 1883. To the consternation of some of the guests, the menu contained several non-Kosher items, which were anathema to more traditional members of the UAHC."[12] The banquet was lavish, and it emphasized the economic shift that Jews had begun to see and feel among themselves. Moreover, the menu from this event was a clear statement that the traditional dietary laws in Judaism had begun to fall to the wayside. The food included clams, crabs, shrimp, and frogs' legs, and it mixed meat and dairy products, all of which are prohibited by kosher laws. The Trefa Banquet affirmed the reality that Judaism in the United States meant adapting to different foodways. In the ensuing years, reactions to the Trefa Banquet varied. Some people understood the event as a natural expression of American Jewish acculturation in the middle of the country. Others viewed the event as a disrespectful display and an insult to Jewry's commitment to its God-given dietary practices. Regardless, the memory of the Trefa Banquet serves as a reminder that dietary customs and foodways in Judaism have always been influenced by local traditions and, to one degree or another, the process of acculturation.[13] This process comes into bold relief as we analyze some of the development of Cincinnati's foodways, as seen through the pages of its cookbooks.

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[12] Ibid., 30.

[13] See the important article on this subject by Lance J. Sussman, "The Myth of the Trefa Banquet: American Culinary Culture and the Radicalization of Food Policy in American Reform Judaism," *The American Jewish Archives Journal* 57, nos. 1&2 (2005): 29–52.

Jewish Food in Cincinnati: Sisterhood Cookbook Analysis

The designs and miscellaneous information in this chapter's cookbooks reveal a great deal. Six cookbooks will be discussed, and they range quite a lot in their affiliated organizations: Three are from local synagogues (both Reform and Conservative), and three are from Jewish organizations, such as the Jewish Community Center and the Ladies Auxiliary of the Jewish War Veterans. Those from Conservative synagogues show a closer adherence to kosher laws, while the communal cookbooks display more flexibility and variation, as they would have been used by Jews of all backgrounds. This chapter will focus on the common regional and Jewish threads between these six Jewish communal cookbooks.

The earliest of the cookbooks, published in 1950 by the Ladies Auxiliary of the Jewish War Veterans, is titled *Old and New Favorite Recipes*. This group was likely composed of women from all facets of Jewish life—Reform, Conservative, and secular. The cover page has a military emblem with a Jewish star on it and says, "Jewish War Veterans of the United States" across it, and the bottom of the cover reads: "A recipe collection of delectable dishes and tasty tidbits by the members of the Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary (JWVA), Cincinnati no. 438."[14] Like the sisterhood cookbooks, it is written by and for women. It begins with a foreword that describes the role that the auxiliary plays in supporting and encouraging veterans. Throughout the book, each woman who contributed to the publication is named next to her recipe, but the formatting of the names fits more with the era of the 1950s, wherein the contributors are identified by their husband's name—for example, "Mrs. Ephraim Roth (Helen)." The custom of identifying married women by their husband's name was nearly *de rigeur* in the post–World War II era; oftentimes the woman's first name was omitted altogether, but this publication included it

[14] Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Old and New Favorite Recipes: A Recipe Collection of Delectable Dishes and Tasty Tidbits* (Cincinnati, OH: Jewish War Veterans Authority, Cincinnati, 1950), cover page.

parenthetically. In addition, this cookbook is very clearly a fundraising project—its pages are filled with advertisements for markets, pet stores, furniture companies, and clothing brands and stores. The bottom of each advertising page says, "Please patronize our advertisers," similar to the cookbooks produced by the synagogue sisterhoods.[15]

In1958 the same organization published another cookbook, whose cover reads *A Collection of Delectable Dishes and Tasty Tidbits by the Members of the Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary Cincinnati #438 and Their Friends*. This cookbook has many features in common with the earlier one, such as the presentation of the contributor's names and the various advertisements. The first three pages are dedicated to a rhyming poem that explains the purpose of the JWVA. It honors the women as mothers, homemakers, and humanitarians. The introduction also explains the work of JWVA, why these women are needed, and how they support soldiers and veterans both locally and abroad. The section concludes with the words: "For all that she is, and has to do, she still has time to give to you. Recipes, hints and party models make up our book called fun with food."[16] Compared to the 1950 cookbook, the 1958 edition is much more focused on what was considered at the time to be a woman's domestic duties. It has a page devoted to household hints, which makes it clear that, in addition to a fundraising tool, it was also a resource for women in their kitchens and homes.[17]

A 1973 cookbook from Temple Sholom, a Reform synagogue, titled *What's Cooking with Trowel & Trellis,* waxes somewhat poetic in its introduction. Its first page reads:

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Kitchen Connoisseurs and Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Fun with Food* (Cincinnati, OH: Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, Cincinnati, 1958), introduction.
[17] Ibid.

> Flowers, shrubs, trees… each a thing of beauty on their own. Put them all together and what have you got… a magnificent garden…a gorgeous landscape.
>
> And that's exactly what we're doing with the monies raised from 'What's Cooking with Trowel & Trellis,' our 1973–74 fund raising project. Putting it all together on the grounds of the resident home for the mentally retarded, and various other buildings in and around greater Cincinnati.[18]

The book continues with names in the same formatting as the other cookbooks. It also has a page of gratitude and acknowledgments to the contributors and committee members, signed by the sisterhood president. There is nothing explicitly Jewish on the cover and opening pages, nor is there a chapter for Jewish holidays or traditions.[19] Only the occasional Jewish dish identifies this as a Jewish publication.

On the other hand, a 1975 cookbook produced by a Conservative congregation titled *Adath Israel Sisterhood Kosher Gourmet Cookbook* boasts a picture of the synagogue on the cover page and offers its readers explanations of kashrut as well as instructions on how to kosher meat and poultry. The Adath Israel cookbook is much more focused on the Jewish foodways, in contrast to the cookbooks mentioned above. The first three pages contain letters and introductions from the president of sisterhood, the committee members, and the rabbi. The letters use lofty language; the committee members write, "We acknowledge their efforts as true labors of love; love for Judaism, synagogue, sisterhood, and people, and are most appreciative."[20] The rabbi's letter uses similar language and themes: "I know that with all of you it was a true labor of

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[18] Marcia Loewenstein and Marcia Rubin, *What's Cooking?* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Temple Sholom Sisterhood, 1960), 2.
[19] Ibid.
[20] *Sisterhood Jewish Gourmet Cookbook* (Cincinnati, OH: Adath Israel Synagogue, 1975), 4.

love, but, more so, it will go to show how one can enjoy gourmet food while, at the same time observing the dietary laws. I trust that this will serve as an encouragement for others to follow, and to enjoy the many recipes contained herein."[21] From the cover page to these letters, and to the menus for each Jewish holiday in the back of the book, this cookbook has a clear message: Food is a labor of love, and Jewish food is the focal point of the Jewish home.[22]

This same messaging is true in the 1980s sisterhood cookbook, *Enjoy From the Oven*, which was produced by Northern Hills, another Conservative synagogue. While the artwork on the cover and throughout are generic food silhouettes and there is, again, a page of acknowledgements—including specifically to the rabbi and the rabbi's wife for their contributions—there is also a page explaining kashrut. Throughout the cookbook, each recipe is labeled with a P (pareve), D (dairy), or M (meat). The first page gives an explanation that sums up the purpose: "In this, our sisterhood's … cookbook, we have concentrated on foods prepared in the oven, the star attraction of any kitchen, the source of pleasant aromas and comforting warmth. Particularly in the Jewish home, many traditions have evolved in the kitchen; food is an integral part of Jewish life." Again, Judaism is a key component, and this is stated explicitly from the start.[23]

While Jewishness for some of these cookbooks is explicit, for others it is not. The final one analyzed is another one from 1980, titled *A Pinch of This, A Taste of That*. It has no holiday chapter or explanation of kashrut. Even the introduction is very clear about the recipes and purpose of the cookbook:

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[21] Ibid., 3.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Carol Specter and Ruth Brod, *Enjoy from the Oven: Recipes* (Cincinnati, OH: Sisterhood of Northern Hills Synagogue, 1980), i.

> With "a little of this" and a "pinch of that" we hope to share all our secrets of Jewish cooking that have been passed down from generation to generation. You'll notice that our cookbook is a geographic melting pot. You'll taste prokes from Hungary (a stuffed cabbage dish), sand pie from Russia, boaraches (a baked pastry in Sephardic Jewish cuisine and Israeli cuisine) from Greece and even leek meat loaf from Egypt."[24]

This cookbook has an acknowledgement page and lists of conversions and substitutions for cooking, but its focus is on representing the melting pot of American Jewish kitchens.[25]

Jewish Food of Cincinnati: Ingredients

There are not a lot of distinctive ingredients in Cincinnati cooking. The main agriculture in Ohio is meat rather than crops, due to the varied climate throughout the year, yet, interestingly, the cookbooks in this chapter did not have a prevalence of meat recipes. There are, perhaps surprisingly to some, a surfeit of dairy recipes. This may be because many farms throughout the state of Ohio have produced large amounts of milk and cheese products.[26] In some of cookbooks examined in this chapter, dairy products appear mostly in appetizers, such as in dips or wrapped in dough.[27] One cookbook puts cheese into an eggs, cheese, and kugel chapter, which could be for the purpose of kashrut, as it separate dairy dishes from nondairy ones.[28] Another contains cheese recipes for foods that were traditionally forbidden by Jewish dietary law, such as shrimp cheese puffs, crab cheese fondue, cheese dip with crab, shrimp and cheese dip, an oyster stew

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[24] Jewish Community Center, *A Pinch of This, a Taste of That* (Cincinnati, OH: Jewish Community Center, 1980), 2.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Hannah Patterson, "Top 10 Ohio Agriculture Products," Farm Flavor, December 20, 2022, https://farmflavor.com/ohio/ohio-crops-livestock/top-10-ohio-agriculture-products/.
[27] Specter and Brod, *Enjoy from the Oven*, 1–18.
[28] *Sisterhood Jewish Gourmet Cookbook*, 31–46.

(which is basically just oysters and half and half), as well as a soup with lobster bisque and cream cheese.[29] The dairy trend continues into desserts; each cookbook has recipes for cheesecake, cheese pies, and even cheese cookies. One goes as far as to offer eight different recipes for cheesecake, spanning six pages.[30]

While cheese is core to the agriculture and cuisine in Cincinnati and Ohio, this is not the only item that spans every cookbook and every part of the meal. Another core ingredient that appears in all of the Cincinnati cookbooks is potatoes, which are called for in appetizers such as potato cheese puffs, sweet potato balls,[31] and potato salads.[32] Side dishes and vegetables use various items, but the majority of vegetables are potatoes. Recipes include twice-baked potatoes, scalloped potatoes, and potato gelatin molds, such as a potato and carrot mold.[33] There are also various potato-based soups, such as a plain potato soup[34] and a winter soup, in which the main ingredient is potatoes.[35] Potatoes appear in some unique forms, such a potato bread,[36] a potato surprise that includes cheese whiz and milk, and a tuna casserole with potato chips on top.[37] This simple root vegetable is also a core ingredient in various Jewish recipes, specifically ones from Eastern Europe, where potatoes were also a staple in the cuisine. These include everything from kugels to knishes to latkes (potato pancakes). Another cookbook shares a personal story of a family that came to the United States from Bavaria and shared a recipe titled "Cincinnati Potato

[29] Loewenstein and Rubin, *What's Cooking?*. No page numbers are used in this book.
[30] Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Old and New Favorite Recipes: A Recipe Collection of Delectable Dishes and Tasty Tidbits* (Cincinnati, OH: Jewish War Veterans Authority, Cincinnati, 1950), 80–85.
[31] Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Old and New Favorite Recipes*, 48.
[32] *Sisterhood Jewish Gourmet Cookbook*, 50–51.
[33] Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Old and New Favorite Recipes*, 48–52, 75.
[34] Ibid., 66.
[35] Kitchen Connoisseurs and Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Fun with Food* (Cincinnati, OH: Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, Cincinnati, 1958), 87.
[36] Loewenstein and Rubin, *What's Cooking?*.
[37] Kitchen Connoisseurs and Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Fun with Food*.

Birches," which are described as "a savory load with a hard crust covered with poppy seeds, probably eaten for normal Sabbaths throughout the year."[38]

A final ingredient that was prominent in the Cincinnati cookbooks is one that tells the story of the city's closeness with its neighboring state, Kentucky. Here, agriculture led to whiskey production , which began in the 1700s as various families began the distilling process throughout Kentucky; "by 1786, the whiskey we now call bourbon was known as 'Kentucky' or 'Western' whiskey—just so people could distinguish it from Pennsylvania, Monongahela, or Maryland rye whiskey."[39] A key part of whiskey production in Kentucky was that the Ohio River allowed for transportation and trade throughout the center of the country. As Cincinnati sits directly on the river and not far from the distilleries, whiskey became ingrained in the cuisine and foodways of the city. This is seen clearly in one of the sisterhood cookbooks, as its section titled "Appetizers" begins with a cocktail: "Fool Proof Whiskey Sour."[40] Another cookbook includes an entire chapter for before-dinner drinks and another for after-dinner drinks, emphasizing how essential liquor was to the everyday kitchen. Other cookbooks use the local drink in baking recipes, such as whiskey balls[41] and even whiskey cookies.[42] Whiskey is clearly not just a beverage, but a part of the foodways in Cincinnati dining and baking.

Jewish Food of Cincinnati: Dishes

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[38] Nathan, *Jewish Cooking in America*, 71.
[39] "American Whiskey Trail," American Whiskey History | American Whiskey Trail, accessed March 21, 2023, https://americanwhiskeytrail.distilledspirits.org/american-whiskey-history.
[40] Loewenstein and Rubin, *What's Cooking?*, 1.
[41] Kitchen Connoisseurs and Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Fun with Food*, 80.
[42] Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Old and New Favorite Recipes*, 24.

While there are only a few ingredients that are unique to Cincinnati, the dishes that appear throughout the cookbooks reveal much about the history of the city itself. One of the most common dishes spanning all six of the cookbooks is the casserole.

The dish has a deep history in Europe but found even more success in the United States in the twentieth century: "Casserole-style cooking grew in popularity because it was convenient and easy, allowing you to cook and serve a meal in the same dish."[43] These cookbooks demonstrate the centrality of the dish in Cincinnati, as they each contain a great range of casseroles. One has casseroles filled with everything from tuna, chicken, salmon, and rice, to vegetable-based casseroles such as broccoli, spinach, green bean, and peas.[44] There are some creative casserole recipes, including a luncheon devilled tuna casserole[45] or a spaghetti and meat casserole.[46] The dish can be served hot or cold, as an appetizer, main course, or side dish. One cookbook adds a spinach and artichoke casserole to a Shavuot menu, demonstrating that casseroles are not just for everyday meals, but for holidays, as well.[47]

Sauerkraut and sauerbraten constitute another genre of recipes that illustrate the cultural influence of Cincinnati's European heritage, especially its large German population. There are recipes for a regular sauerbraten in almost all of the Cincinnati cookbooks and also one titled a "Seven-day Sauerbraten."[48] The dish finds its roots "in German cuisine, [as a] dish of spiced braised beef—a solid cut from the round or rump is marinated for three or four days in red wine

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[43] "What Is a Casserole? Definition, History, and Variations ," MasterClass, 2023, https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-a-casserole#HkCc56dsbJagxHB0r8UK0.
[44] Specter and Brod, *Enjoy from the Oven*, 80, 84, 117, 128.
[45] Kitchen Connoisseurs and Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Fun with Food (*Cincinnati, OH: Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, Cincinnati, 1958), 100.
[46] Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Old and New Favorite Recipes*, 27.
[47] *Sisterhood Jewish Gourmet Cookbook*, 247.
[48] Kitchen Connoisseurs and Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Fun with Food*, 111.

and vinegar" and various other spices.[49] The description and ingredients are remarkably consistent in the various cookbooks. Some of the cookbooks take pains to emphasize that these recipes derive from the original German dish that would also marinate for several days.

Another common German dish is sauerkraut, which is simply the German name for pickled cabbage, and both cabbage and pickled foods have been part of Jewish European cuisine for some time. There are names for pickled cabbage in nearly every Eastern and Central European language; the German one became the most common as German immigrants came to the United States.[50] The sauerkraut recipes in these cookbooks include various versions of the dish, some of which are quite creative. There are sauerkraut balls, sauerkraut meatballs, sauerkraut salad,[51] and sauerkraut soup.[52] The dish may have been brought over by "German immigrants [but they] began to popularize sauerkraut in America in the eighteenth century. The first American Jewish cookbook, *Jewish Cookery* (Philadelphia, 1871), included a recipe for 'How To Make Sauer Krout.'"[53] The popularity of sauerkraut is also seen in the manufacturing of it in Ohio: "In 1905, Allen Slessman (1875–1962) combined several small Great Lakes sauerkraut manufacturers to form The Fremont Company, which still exists today in Fremont, Ohio."[54] The dish has flourished in the kitchen and markets in Cincinnati and the rest of Ohio over the course of the twentieth century.

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[49] Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia. "sauerbraten." Encyclopedia Britannica, August 13, 2021. https://www.britannica.com/topic/sauerbraten.
[50] Barbara Rolek, "Sauerkraut Packs a Punch in Many Eastern European Recipes," The Spruce Eats (The Spruce Eats, October 2, 2019), https://www.thespruceeats.com/sauerkraut-the-quintessential-eastern-european-vegetable-1137498.
[51] Loewenstein and Rubin, *What's Cooking?*.
[52] *Sisterhood Jewish Gourmet Cookbook*, 27.
[53] Marks, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Food*, 526.
[54] Ibid. On Allen Slessman, see Donald Levitt, "The Secrets of Centennial Family Businesses The Fremont Company: Preparing For The Next 100 Years," 2006. See https://cdn.website-editor.net/d752b71be77140e3b6c15ffcc637557a/files/uploaded/The_Fremont_Company_-_Preparing_for_the_Next_100_Years.pdf,

Kuchen, another dish that reflects Cincinnati's German cultural heritage, appears frequently in this chapter's cookbooks. Kuchen is German for "cake," but this dish traditionally appears as "a delicious mash-up of cake and pie, topped with creamy custard." Additionally, "true German cakes tend to have much less sugar and a bit more butter or shortening than the cakes with which we are most familiar. This custom explains why German desserts are usually topped with fruit, streusel or whipped topping."[55] The recipes for kuchen reflect this description. One can find examples of apple kuchen recipes in the sisterhood cookbooks published in 1975[56] and 1980.[57] Many of these cookbooks have various recipes for a basic bundt kuchen,[58] as well as a version titled "French Kuchen."[59] The variation from kuchen that became even more of a staple in Jewish cooking and throughout American foodways is kaffeekuchen, which became known as coffee cake[60]—a dish of such ubiquitous popularity that it appears in all of the Cincinnati sisterhood cookbooks. One book even offers an entire chapter simply titled, "Breads and Coffee Cakes."[61] Along with kuchens and coffee cakes, another baked good in the Cincinnati communal cookbooks is schnecken, which became known as "the American Sticky Bun—one of the most popular Schnecken recipes came from the German Jewish Bake Shop in Cincinnati, Ohio. It started in 1929 by the United Jewish Social Agencies as a means of providing part-time employment for women, [and] the shop was immediately successful."[62] While the Bake Shop is no longer open, the memory of it and its recipes for schnecken are found throughout these cookbooks.

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[55] Amber Kanuckel, "What the Heck Is Kuchen?," Farmers' Almanac (Farmers' Almanac , September 22, 2022), https://www.farmersalmanac.com/what-the-heck-is-kuchen-22786.
[56] *Sisterhood Jewish Gourmet Cookbook*, 193.
[57] Specter and Brod, *Enjoy from the Oven*, 190.
[58] *Sisterhood Jewish Gourmet Cookbook*, 206.
[59] Kitchen Connoisseurs and Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Fun with Food*, 49.
[60] Marks, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Food*, 335.
[61] *Sisterhood Jewish Gourmet Cookbook*, 129–151.
[62] Nathan, *Jewish Cooking in America*, 94.

Jewish Food of Cincinnati: Putting the "Jewish" in Jewish Cookbooks

The Jewishness of these Cincinnati community cookbooks varies a great deal. Some are explicitly Jewish, including pictures of the physical synagogue as well as explanations and kosher labeling.[63] One includes Jewish recipes throughout the book, rather than in one specific section. This includes "Sukkot Stuffed Cabbage" and "Hanukah Potato Pancakes" in the meat chapter, "Shevuot Kreplach" listed under soups, and "Sabbath Hungarian Biscuits" and "Rosh Hashanah Sunshine Cake" under cakes.[64] Another kosher cookbook includes a holiday chapter, with explanations of each holiday and a list of suggested items to be served, such as a Shabbat list that includes meat tzimmes, brisket, beef cholent (a slow-cooked meat and bean stew), roast lamb, chicken cholent, gefilte fish loaf, parve kugels, and *flodin* (a traditional Hungarian fruit-filled dessert).[65] Other cookbooks include actual menus for each holiday. In one book it is labeled as "Friday Night Dinner" and the menu includes: "gefilte fish," "chicken soup with luckshen" (specific noodles that were most often used in kugels), "roast chicken or roast brisket," "tzimmes," and "strudel, bobke" (a sweet braided bread that is identified with the Jewish communities of Poland and Ukraine) or "sponge cake" for dessert.[66] This same cookbook includes a note about kashrut in its introduction: "These recipes are tried and true kosher dishes. Please check which are milchig, fleishig, or parve, and when you purchase ingredients, please check for the kosher labels."[67] This emphasizes that, while the cookbooks can suggest kosher recipes and instructions, keeping kosher was still focus on the individual family and homes.

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[63] Specter and Brod, *Enjoy from the Oven*, ii.
[64] Jewish Community Center, *A Pinch of This, a Taste of That*, 1, 15, 32, 35.
[65] Loewenstein and Rubin, *What's Cooking?*
[66] *Sisterhood Jewish Gourmet Cookbook*, 219–221.
[67] Ibid., 2.

The 1975 cookbook published by the sisterhood of Adath Israel offers a whole chapter titled "Festive Holidays, Passover and Israel." Within the Israel section, there are recipes for bourekas, hummus, pita, kibbutz salad, and felafel.[68] In a 1980 cookbook, a recipe for falafel includes a note explaining what falafel are and how the dish is served in Israel.[69] In both cases there is an intrinsic connection to the land and foods of Israel.

In two of the cookbooks, though, the connection to Israel and to Judaism seems much less clear. In the 1950s Ladies Auxiliary cookbook, there are no chapters explicitly about holidays or festivals and no foods labeled with these descriptions. The only mention of Judaism is in the occasional recipe such as "gefullte fish" or a dish that includes tuna and matzah meal in it.[70] If the word "Jewish" were not in the title or introduction, it could be unclear that this was even a Jewish cookbook. The same is true for the 1973 sisterhood cookbook from the Reform Temple Sholom, which does not include any holiday chapter and instead has a wide range of nonkosher items, ranging from shrimp cheese puffs, to crab cheese dip fondue, ham jambalaya—a rare inclusion of a pork product—crab mushroom soup, and hot shrimp salad.[71] The absence of these sections could indicate either that the readers did not need further information on Jewish holidays or that it was not relevant or important to them. It may also emphasize their secular lives and foodways and their turning away from holiday-based cuisine. Other than being produced by a synagogue's sisterhood, there is very little that is explicitly Jewish within the pages of this cookbook, beyond the people who created and used it.

A few recipes can be found in all of these cookbooks, regardless of the kosher status or the inclusion of a holiday chapter. In addition to sauerkraut, each has a range of cabbage-based

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[68] Ibid., 275–289 Spelling is written as it appears in the cookbook.
[69] Jewish Community Center, *A Pinch of This, a Taste of That*, 275.
[70] Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, *Old and New Favorite Recipes*, 36–37.
[71] Loewenstein and Rubin, *What's Cooking?*.

recipes, which show the connection to both German culture and Eastern European foodways. These include stuffed cabbages, sweet and sour cabbage, cabbage kugel, and slaws. The other dish that spans these cookbooks is kugel, a Jewish food that had "its birthplace eight centuries ago in southern Germany, [and that later] Ashkenazim brought … with them eastward and the dish gradually evolved and expanded from its humble origins."[72] Immigrants both from Germany and Eastern Europe would have enjoyed this dish, which is why it flourished in Cincinnati Jewish cuisine; one cookbook from 1980 includes fourteen different kugel recipes,[73] while another from 1975 has eight.[74] Most of the kugels listed are potato, for a savory choice, or a basic cinnamon kugel. This Jewish noodle dish appears in every one of these cookbooks, always with a basic version containing noodles, dairy, and cinnamon, and then some offer additional options, including some with canned (not fresh) fruit.

Conclusion

Throughout the Cincinnati Jewish communal cookbooks, the level of Judaism is quite varied. This may be connected to the Jewish history of the city, which is the cradle of American Reform Judaism and thus more removed from traditional Judaism and instead leaning into American secular foodways. Further, the hard-working and pioneering culture of Cincinnati carries through in these cookbooks, which emphasize dishes that are convenient and good for feeding whole families, such as casseroles, meats, and large cakes. What is most distinct to Cincinnati Jewish cooking is its ties to German foodways and immigration. While other regional cuisine was

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[72] Marks, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Food*, 338.
[73] Jewish Community Center, *A Pinch of This, a Taste of That*, 20–29.
[74] *Sisterhood Jewish Gourmet Cookbook*, 38–42.

heavily influenced by the wave of immigration from Eastern Europe, Cincinnati has been able to maintain much of its German beginnings and influence.

Conclusion

Throughout this regional research, some aspects of the Jewish foodways are distinct and others are quite similar. The climate and local produce are clear indicators of differences in ingredients and dishes in each region. The cultural impacts on the foodways, though, are apparent when framed through the lens of regionalism. Utilizing the scholarship on the topic, it is evident that everything about Jewish regional cuisine—from which dishes were cooked, to whether kosher foods were used, even to the language and styling of the communal cookbooks—can be understood more deeply through this lens. For example, in Boston they may label their cookbooks as gourmet and include titles such as "Hors d'oeuvres" and "Entrees," allowing the cultural impact of the elitism and elevated persona of Boston to cross into the language and designs of the cookbooks. By contrast, cookbooks in Atlanta or Cincinnati are more likely to have chapters titled "Soups," "Salads," "Meat," and " Bread." The other key aspects of regionalism are the relationship between the Jewish community and everyone else and the relationship of different Jewish waves of migration. Cincinnati and Los Angeles were both cities of opportunity and began as towns that were filled with hard-working immigrants. In Cincinnati, the wave of Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants from Germany have greatly influenced the food, whereas in Los Angeles it is the Latin and Asian communities that have affected the cuisine and tastes of the Jewish community. There are many specific cultural norms and regional differences that have shaped the foodways of these four cities; while these are discussed in greater detail in each chapter, there are also similarities that have yet to be covered.

One commonality among these local Jewish communal cookbooks was a Passover section or Passover recipes. While some had a whole chapter dedicated to the holiday or to Jewish festivals in general and others did not, Passover recipes appear in almost every one of the

cookbooks discussed. Passover is centered around food (matzah as the main item) and takes place fully at home. It is a holiday that is grounded in the kitchen, from the process of cleaning to a service/seder based around the dining room table to a week of particular dietary restrictions. There are symbolic foods and meals included in most Jewish holidays, but the Passover recipes throughout these cookbooks emphasize that this festival is unique to the foodways of Jews, regardless of where in the United States they live.

Another commonality in this research has been the influence of Ashkenazi cuisine on American Judaism. While Jewish immigrants came from many places to the United States, the largest wave of Jewish immigration was that of Eastern Europeans at the turn of the twentieth century. The effect of this population on American Judaism is seen in many ways in Jewish communities throughout the country, including in regional foods. Almost all of the cookbooks in this study contain some variation of traditional Jewish Ashkenazi foods, such as cabbage-based dishes, knishes, blintzes, gefilte fish, chopped liver, and borscht.[1] While each region may adapt them and allow the dish to evolve with local customs and ingredients, the basics of these foods remain the same. Jewish food culture in America shares many similarities throughout the country; regionalism has only expanded the foodways by adding in more items, rather than taking out many of these common Jewish dishes.

Additional research could easily expand this knowledge; this paper was limited to accessible sources and was not able to cover, for example, the various versions of cookbooks from the same synagogues over the years, nor were there many books available dating earlier in the twentieth or even in the nineteenth centuries, let alone the many publications from sisterhoods already into the twenty-first century. Further, cookbooks are a way into the home of

[1] Without going into the history of each of these dishes, the origins of them and their developments as part of Jewish foodways are discussed here: Marks, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Food*, 56, 64, 84, 219, 322, 363.

American Jews, but foodways also exist in markets, industries, restaurants, and community events. Consider, for example, the impact of businesses such as Manischewitz, which was founded in Cincinnati; the industry surrounding Coca-Cola in Atlanta; or the impact of Jewish food on Hollywood and, simultaneously, the impact of Hollywood and the media in representing Jewish American food. All of these aspects and many more are beyond the focus of this paper and must be noted as key components of defining a wider look at Jewish American foodways. Additionally, Sephardim (Jews from Spain and Portugal) and Mizrachim (Jews from the Middle East and North Africa) have changed the face of Jewish food in the United States, but as they have emigrated more recently—primarily at the end of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—their influence is underrepresented in this research, which was conducted using archives; and since these archives were primarily from Reform synagogues or nondenominational-based communities, the Orthodox voice is also muted. However, there are vital Sephardi, Mizrachi, and Orthodox synagogues and communities throughout the United States, and deeper research that included these communities would produce a more complete picture. In addition, while it has briefly been touched on, women play an immense role in defining food culture through domestic work as well as through being the collectors of these recipes in families, sisterhoods, and communities. For so much of history, the kitchen has been the realm of women, and women have molded the foodways and been the scribes of this cultural element.

Not every voice, story, recipe, or cookbook is part of this research; there is always more to learn. It is, however, the hope that this one very particular topic, while not purporting to cover the entire breadth of regional Jewish American foodways, nonetheless reveals the deep value that a regional lens can add to the understanding of a place and its food culture. Cuisine is not just the

food of a people, nor is matzah simply unleavened bread. Food carries meaning. Recipes bear stories. Location molds and shapes our culture. Neighboring people share relationships, meals, and traditions. Jewish American food is defined by all of these factors that are directly a part of regionalism. As one rabbi stated in the 1981 Boston sisterhood cookbook: "There is nothing more central to our lives than food and good eating is a delight of the human experience."[2]

[2] *Specialty of the House* (Boston, Temple Israel Sisterhood, 1981), 1.

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